

A young man wearing a black bicycle helmet and a bright blue polo shirt is riding a dark blue bicycle on a gravel path. He is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. In the background, a large group of nude people is gathered on a grassy area near a body of water, surrounded by trees. The scene is outdoors and appears to be a nudist beach.

Naked in  
School

Tom's  
Troubles

Seems Ndenyal

# Naked in School - Tom's Troubles

This is the fourth tale in the saga of Kevin and Denise, where the women are awesome and the men are good at listening to them and of course, all of the kids are very, very precocious. Tom has a life-changing experience as a little boy. He has no memory of this, but when he's selected for the Program, all hell breaks loose.

Reading the three earlier stories in this series first will provide needed context; also there are spoilers to the prior tales in this story.

This story is published as adult entertainment and contains material of an explicit, sexual nature.  
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*Scene from Chapter 2*

## Naked in School - Tom's Troubles

### Chapter 1

“Okay, kids, here we are,” Angela Armstrong said to her children as she turned her car into the drive leading to the visitors’ parking area of their new school. “Remember, your counselor at St. George’s in Munich told us this new school shouldn’t be much different from St. George’s School. They used the same curriculum in Munich as the British schools do, so you should fit right in. So are you excited about starting in another new school—in yet another new country?”

“Yeah, Mom,” chorused both Tom and Lynette.

“Mo-o-o-om, that’s *so* lame,” giggled Lynette. “That’s exactly what you asked us this time last year when we moved to Munich and started at St. George’s there!”

The siblings looked at each other and nodded as Tom bumped her shoulder with his.

Angela chuckled. “I remember saying that to you guys,” she said. “I just wanted to cheer up Tom. Tom, you look unhappy.”

“Can’t help it, Mom... I keep bringing this up; but I sure wish Andrew was going here too,” Tom said. “I’ll miss seeing him around school.”

“Yeah, I know,” Angela sighed. “I know how close you two are... but you saw his new school, Woodhouse College, when we passed it just down the road—and you’ll see him every day at home anyway.”

Tom recalled the discussion his family had about his and his siblings’ school plans when it became time to arrange their move to London. As part of their planning, Tom’s parents wanted their kids to go to top schools, so they looked for ones with good reputations for Andrew, 18 years old, and for Tom and Lynette, who were both 15, and found schools in the East Finchley area of London which met their approval. But it meant that Andrew would be attending a different one from Tom.

Tom had asked his dad, Duncan, during their planning, “Why does Andrew have to go to a different school from me, Dad? He’s still in high school, right?”

“Well, Andrew’s going into his year thirteen now,” his dad had answered. “His new school is called a college and it’s just for kids 18 and 19; they don’t have the lower grades. Besides, if we still lived in Canada, he’d be going away to a university now, so he wouldn’t have been in your school then either. Your new school is supposed to be a good one too; it’s why we’re letting a house nearby, but it doesn’t have Andrew’s grade—when the kids from your new school finish year eleven, they usually go on to Woodhouse.”

Tom’s thoughts returned to the present as his mom was still speaking about Andrew’s school.

“When kids from a college like Woodhouse finish their senior year—oops, they’re not high school seniors here, the top grade’s called ‘sixth form’; I still can’t get used to the differences in

how the school grades work in England—they're different from Canada... and from Germany too—when Andrew finishes there, he'll go on to university.”

They left the car and started walking to the building; lots of kids were streaming through the entrance doors.

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Tom and Lynette Armstrong were step-siblings. They were the same age, almost to the day, and both were 15 years old now. They were Canadian natives and had lived in Canada for the first thirteen years of their lives; then their father Duncan's job in international finance had taken the family first to Munich, Germany for a year, and now the family had moved to London, England, for Duncan's management job with the bank's international division. Tom physically took after his dad. Duncan was 6 feet 4 inches tall and had played guard in college basketball in Canada where he had become an All-Canadian collegiate athlete in his senior year.

Now at age 15, Tom was 6 feet tall, weighed 172 pounds, and was still growing, very much on track to eventually reach his father's stature. Tom loved bicycling and distance running and was good at both, frequently accompanying his dad or his older brother Andrew on their runs and bike rides. About a year before the family had moved to Germany, Andrew had begun a strength and endurance training regime when he started playing league soccer in Toronto and he had gotten Tom to begin working out with him, hoping that Tom would like soccer too and start playing, but Tom didn't much care for the sport. He did like the pumped feeling that weight-lifting gave him, though, so he had kept up with it, and his large frame allowed him to develop powerful muscles.

Lynette was 5 feet 5 inches and weighed about 115 pounds and next to her step-brother, she looked tiny, but her body had matured nicely and she had a narrow waist, a B-cup bust, and long sleek legs, toned by years of her own running and biking. The two were not only step-siblings, they were also each other's best friends. The children had met when Duncan and Angela, Lynette's mother, had begun dating and Tom and Lynette had been instantly attracted to each other; they discovered that they liked the same music groups, movies, books, even school, just about everything. That's when Lynette began organizing Tom's life and he loved having her do it. He thought she was so cool because she always considered his own wants before her own. It was sibling rivalry turned on its head—the two competed to outdo each other in how well they looked after and treated each other.

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As the three of them walked to the school office, Tom was thinking as he watched the kids flowing around him and his sister. “Yeah, Mom said ‘new year, new school, new country.’ At least this time we don't have to learn a new language too. Good thing that the classes at St. George's were mostly in English, though,” he mused and Lynette grinned and nodded at his comment.

The family had lived in Munich for a year, after all, so they did learn to speak German—not like

natives, understandably, but after a year, their German was quite passable. And being Canadian, they had also learned French—the Québécois version, anyway, and were fluent in that language.

At the office, Angela dropped off the folders with Tom's and Lynette's school records from their prior schools, got receipts for the documents, and then she was asked to fill out a few additional forms. When she finished, the office supervisor told them that the children would need to see the counselor for some final items, but the counselor wasn't currently available because of a family matter.

"But you're both okay to begin classes," the lady told them, "Here are your class schedules. Your files show that St. George's sent your class information ahead; that let us assign your classes beforehand, didn't it." She finished her instructions. "The two of you will be called by the counselor next week, perhaps on the Tuesday, you'll see. Meanwhile, today is just for orientation. You'll go to your home room first and then go to each of your next classes every fifteen minutes to meet your teachers and get your class materials. First day of classes is on Monday. On the Monday, go to home room first, then as well there's an assembly right after that. Any questions?"

None of them had a question so they left the office. After saying goodbye to their mother, Tom and Lynette compared their schedules.

"Cool!" Lynette laughed. "We got the same schedule again, just like last year."

"Yeah," Tom grinned. "Like they think we're twins, right? Just look at us... we look so much like each other!"

Lynette giggled and slapped his shoulder. "I don't think anyone will understand how we're not twins. Same dark blonde hair, same last name, almost same birthday."

"Yeah. Two days apart. Mom had a real...l...l...ly long labor?" Tom spread his arms. They both laughed.

The two went to their home room class and spent the rest of the day in a whirlwind of quick getting-to-know-you classes, the periods so short that they had little time to speak with, let alone introduce themselves to any of the other kids.

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On Monday the siblings rode their bikes to school. Tom loved riding, but glancing over at him, Lynette noticed a thoughtful look on his face.

"Hey, what's bothering you, brother?" she called.

"Nah, nothing really... Just thinking about riding to school when the weather gets bad," Tom answered. "Munich winters weren't bad at all, but you know how London has that rep for rain and miserable winter weather."

"Yeah, true. Well, there's a bus route—the route's closer to us than any of the subway stops, so we'll take the bus if we can't ride. Hey, think the folks'll spring for a car for us?"

Tom laughed ruefully. "Right. Even Andrew couldn't get a car out of them. Remember Dad? 'Son, you're in London. Public transit everywhere. No need for a car. I don't use one.' But Dad takes a cab or Uber to work so he hardly ever needs to drive himself."

Lynette agreed. "Yeah, Dad says the parking fees near his office are terrible."

They arrived at the school and locked their bikes up at the bike racks. Hundreds of kids were milling around, parking their bikes, leaving cars, and streaming into the school building. Tom and Lynette moved with the crowd and once inside the building, set off for their home room.

After the class got settled and the bell rang, the teacher welcomed them.

"Good morning, everyone. We'll be here for a few minutes before everyone goes to the assembly hall. There are some special instructions; everyone must leave their rucksacks and bags in their lockers before you go to assembly. If you have mobiles, leave them in your bags. No mobiles are to be brought into the assembly hall. The head teacher will be introducing a new program to the school and everyone will be on their best behavior, won't you."

When she said that, there was a sudden chorus of exclamations and moans from the students.

"Quiet, please!" she called. "Now everyone, tidy up your rucksacks and bags and get ready for the bell. I'll expect everyone to be orderly as you go to your lockers and then go quietly to the assembly hall."

Within several minutes, the bell rang and everyone left the room, following the teacher's instructions, and soon they were entering the assembly hall. Tom and Lynette were whispering to each other as they walked.

"What do you suppose this is?" Lynette wondered aloud.

A kid passing them heard and muttered, "Prob'ly that bloody new Program rot, mates."

"What program...?" Tom began, but the kid had moved ahead into the crowd.

He looked around; everyone was grim-faced and there was little conversation. Since Tom's classroom was fairly distant from the assembly hall, his group was among the last to arrive and a teacher stationed at the door handed them each a sealed envelope as they entered.

"Don't open it until you're told," she cautioned and pointed at the seats they were to take.

Several minutes later, the students were all seated and the head teacher, Dr Taylor, appeared on the stage.

"Welcome to a new school year at Friern Barnet School," he intoned. "I'm pleased to see many old faces of our returning pupils, and look forward to meeting all of our new students."

There was a rush of murmurs through the audience.

"I'd like to introduce the new staff people who have joined our faculty for our new school year," he continued, and then began calling everyone's attention to four of the eight teachers who were

patrolling the aisles in the hall. As he called out their names and departments, the teachers waved their arms in acknowledgment at the polite applause.

“Now we’ve come to the topic for this assembly,” Taylor said, and a hush fell over the room and the sounds of nervous bodies squirming in their seats could be heard.

“You’ve all probably read in the tabloids about the Department for Education’s new Naked in School Program, being run in the schools by the Education Authority,” Taylor continued. “And letters about the Program went out to your parents last spring, so you knew the school would need to be planning for it to begin at some point, isn’t that so. Well, we’ve decided to move things right along, not delay any further, and so we’ll begin the Program this term—right here in this hall today.”

There was a great outcry of shock from the students. Tom sat bolt upright, his heart hammering in his chest. He had heard the words “naked” and “school” in the same phrase and suddenly the words began to register in his mind.

“Please settle down. You knew this program would eventually be coming and everyone’s had plenty of forewarning, haven’t you. Now you were all given an envelope when you entered the assembly hall. It contains a copy of the National Program Committee’s booklet for pupils, the ‘Introduction to the Naked in School Program,’ hereafter we’ll refer to it as the Program booklet, won’t we. All the rules for the Program are in it. You can open your envelopes now. Take a minute now to glance it through to see what it contains, but you must read it more fully after the assembly because you’ll be responsible for knowing and following all of its rules. We’d like your attention back after you’ve taken a minute to scan through your booklet.”

While he was speaking, there were rustling sounds and murmurs from the audience as they opened their envelopes and looked through their copies. Tom looked at his copy; the image of a naked young couple holding hands on the cover jumped out at him and he closed his eyes and groaned. For the next minute it was quiet in the room while Tom, with shaky hands, flipped through its pages, incredulous at what he was seeing. His attention was soon interrupted by the head teacher.

“I’d like your full attention now. I will now go over a brief synopsis of what Program participants must do. For all pupils taking part in their Program week, their complete nudity shall be required during school hours. In addition, if you’re attending or participating at any school-sponsored activities during your week, your nudity shall also be required then. As the rules require, any attempt to hide or cover up, for example using your rucksack or long hair to cover up with, is a Program violation and violations can result in your being required to repeat for another week. Other Program violations ...”

Tom had stopped hearing the head teacher while he continued to flip aimlessly through his copy and the constriction which had been building in his chest grew tighter. His breath was becoming rapid and shallow as his anxiety rose and he realized that a panic attack was imminent. Lynette reached over and took his hand in hers.

“Shhhh... it'll be okay,” she whispered. “Breathe deep; try to relax. You can get through this, Tommie.”

He shook his head in vigorous denial. “I thought... I'd... be done... with this panic crap... by now,” he whispered, panting and then he forced his attention back to the stage where the head teacher was still speaking.

“...about. The Program is supposed to teach you to overcome your modesty and become familiar with the bodies of both sexes and accept your own body and its sexuality. To assist all of you pupils in overcoming any personal modesty, a Program rule called ‘Reasonable Requests’ is described in the booklet. Any of your schoolmates will be permitted to fondle or otherwise touch the sexual organs of a Program participant, as long as the naked participant isn't physically harmed. An example of something that is *not* permitted is that pupils will *not* be allowed to put a foreign object into any body cavity of another pupil. In most cases, the Program participant can decide what he or she thinks is ‘reasonable,’ but unwarranted refusals of Requests shall be considered a Program violation, so you're urged to allow most Requests or suffer some unwanted consequences.

“The next topic I have to cover is called ‘Relief.’ Because of the heightened sexual pressure that the naked pupils will experience, especially if they've been fondled in the hallways between classes, Program participants will have an opportunity to masturbate to orgasm with or without assistance of another pupil during the first five minutes of any class. This must be done where the class can see the participant as it's another teaching component of the Program. The final part of the Program that I'll mention concerns the classroom teaching curriculum; teachers are required to use Program students for any necessary teaching demonstration, for example, doing things like being a model for sex studies in biology or as a figure model in art or photography. There are other related topics mentioned in your booklets; be sure that you read it thoroughly.”

Tom was struggling not to let his rising panic overtake him. He bent forward, trying to get his head between his knees to keep from fainting, but there wasn't enough room between the seat rows to bend far enough forward. He closed his eyes and tried to blank out what the head teacher was saying.

Taylor was still speaking. “Let me stress again that refusing Reasonable Requests and not participating in classroom demonstrations are Program violations, and some violations can extend one's Program participation time by days or weeks.

“Finally, boy and girl participants must use the locker rooms, showers, and rest room facilities of the opposite sex during their Program week. Pupils who are in after-school sports or doing performing arts performances must participate in those activities while naked as well.

“That's a summary of what the rules say. We expect that you will become familiar with all of the Program rules as spelt out in your Program booklet, so be sure to read it to know what your responsibilities are. Not following a rule because you're not familiar with it, isn't an excuse. An inadvertent violation will, of course, be treated the same as an intentional violation.

“Now, as I said, we’re commencing the Program today, and for our Program inauguration, we have a number of pupils who have stepped forward and volunteered to get their week over with straightaway. You may recall that in our letter to your parents last spring, we asked for pupils who would put their names up as volunteers. As well, at that time we had solicited other pupils, by virtue of their popularity or standing at the Friern Barnet School, to participate in the first session when the Program started. Now none of them knew that they would be starting today, but I think you volunteers know who you are. We’ll now ask these pupils to start us off to set a good example for the rest of you pupils when the selections begin next week and at that time, all pupil selections will be at random. For now, these pupils will provide your examples of proper Program behavior, won’t they?”

At hearing those words, the rising tension in the room dropped dramatically.

“Now then, will the following pupils please join us on the stage as your name is called.”

Taylor read a list of sixteen names and those children walked up to the stage, some moving more reluctantly than others, but two had to be coaxed to leave their seats to go up on stage; their willingness to participate must have been coerced somehow.

“All right, pupils, we’re very proud of each one of you for helping us inaugurate our first Program week; thank you all. Everyone, please give these brave pupils your recognition for their fine school spirit, won’t you?”

A round of applause hesitantly began—but it wasn’t very enthusiastic.

“Now is the time to begin the Naked in School Program in our school. To kick off the Program today—and for today only, we’re starting the Program week while we’re all assembled here together so we can begin on a positive note. On subsequent days of the Program week, pupils



*Friern Barnet School Program assembly in the auditorium*

will still be disrobing in public, but you’ll do it at the main school entrance where we’ll provide boxes to store your clothes in for the day, but for today only, they are... erm... oh, ah, thank you. On that trolley just being wheeled in, just there on

your left. Program pupils, please take a box and begin disrobing now.”

Hesitantly, each of the sixteen kids accepted a box, put it down behind him or her, and began removing their clothes; two of them had to be pressured into complying. Soon they were all mostly naked.

Tom, bent over, had his hands clasped over his ears and his eyes were tightly screwed shut. But he still could hear, and then a girl in the audience began crying, followed by the sobs of a second girl. Involuntarily, Tom looked up. There on the stage, most of the children were now completely naked, their hands were aimlessly moving, the children wanting to cover themselves but they had been warned that to do that would be a Program violation.

Suddenly the panic which was rising in Tom peaked and flooded through him, overcoming his attempts to control it. With a grunt of desperation, he jumped up and blindly shuffled himself past a few seated students to get to the aisle, where he turned and ran for the door. A teacher stationed near the door, startled by the boy rushing toward him, moved to intercept him but Tom just barreled right past, pushing the teacher aside, where he crashed through the door into the lobby. Tom staggered down the hall to a nearby boys' restroom, flung open the door, and just made it to a toilet, where he lost his breakfast.

Lynette, startled by Tom's sudden departure, tried following him but was stopped by the teacher at the door who was now trying to keep several other distraught students from leaving the room.

“Please—my brother's in trouble—he's panicking,” she pleaded.

“What?” the teacher asked. “What happened?”

“He panics when he sees nudity. Can't help himself. We need to get him help, he might hurt himself.”

Looking around uncertainly, the teacher called over another teacher to watch the door and left the room with Lynette. Since this had happened at the rear of the auditorium, only a few people were aware of the minor disturbance in the back; everyone's attention was riveted on the naked children on the stage while the head teacher was still speaking, giving further instructions.

Lynette and the teacher could hear a toilet flushing in the nearby boys' room, so the teacher went into the room, leaving Lynette in the hall. The teacher came up to Tom, who was still retching into a toilet.

“You feeling any better now?” he asked as Tom looked up miserably. His face was chalky white.

“N... n... no...” Tom stuttered. “Can't breathe...” he choked out. “Feel sick...”

“Your sister outside said you need help... how can I...?” the teacher began.

“Ooohhh... pl... please... get her...”

The teacher went over to the door and asked Lynette to come in. She ran in and over to Tom, bent down, and wrapped her arms around him.

"Please get a bunch of cool, wet paper towels," she hissed at the teacher.

"Oh... of course!"

He hastened to get the towels and Lynette used them to clean up Tom's face and then she held a wad of fresh ones against his flushed forehead. Soon his breathing turned from panting to a slower, more regular rate and he turned his face to Lynette. It was still ashen white.

"Thanks, sis," he said gratefully. "That really helped."

She looked up at the teacher who was standing there, fidgeting uncomfortably.

"He's in shock—can't you see?" she asked angrily.

"Um... this happened before?"

"Yeah. It's how he gets. This was a bad one though. I think he should go to the nurse... is there one at the school?"

"Oh. Oh yes. There is. Can you walk, young man, or do you need...?"

"Ahh... I can walk," Tom said weakly, but he staggered slightly when he stood up, so Lynette held onto one arm and the teacher took the other. Holding Tom, they supported him in their walk to the nurse's office.

Once Tom was settled on a narrow cot, Lynette explained to the nurse what had happened.

"So he gets panic attacks on just *seeing* nudity?" she asked Lynette.

"Yeah. It began happening to him when he was much younger," she replied. "I was with him when it happened to him last year too. Wasn't this bad when it happened then, though?"

Some life was returning to Tom.

"It was... never... this bad," he spoke haltingly. "But this time... I was trying... to hold myself together... in there... It kept getting worse... kinda like a train wreck in slow motion. They were talking about... making everyone get naked... and then people were undressing right in front of me! And then crying started... That's when I... couldn't hold on... anymore," he finished weakly.

The nurse took Tom's wrist, checking his pulse. "Hmmm... it's weak, thready." She checked his eyes and then took out a thermometer, holding it at his ear. Then she took his blood pressure. She looked at Lynette.

"Has he been seen by a doctor for this? It does look like all the symptoms of panic, doesn't it?"

"Oh yes," Lynette answered. "I even remember the word for what the doc says he has: its gymnophobia. It's funny, I remember the word 'cause we went to school in Germany and schools there are called gymnasiums, it means 'naked place,' but there's nobody naked in those schools, yet now you have it here."

The nurse scowled. "Don't get me started on that... Anyway, okay, panic like this certainly can be

a phobia reaction. It fits... My, he's going to have a bit of difficulty with the Program here, isn't he? Listen, young lady, you are who?"

"Oh, Lynette Armstrong. I'm Tom's sister."

"Okay, Lynette, we'll need to get your mum or dad down here to fetch Tom. What I recommend is for him to see a doctor, perhaps a psychiatrist, and possibly to get him on an anti-anxiety med before he returns to school. Maybe that can help him, but with such a strong reaction to simply *seeing* nudity... I don't know. Let's ring your parents now."

Lynette turned to Tom. "You be okay for a few minutes, bro?"

"Sure. Thanks for looking out for me..."

While Lynette was talking with the nurse, Tom was barely listening; he had begun to recall the incident last year that Lynette had just referred to—it had happened while his family was living in Munich.

## Chapter 2

Thoughts of Tom's experience last year in Munich—was it only a year ago?—ran through his mind. “*Yeah, almost the same thing happened to me in Munich last August... We were living there 'cause Dad got a promotion and we had to move to Germany...*”

He became lost in thought as the memories of that time formed in his mind.

Duncan's bank had promoted him to a director's position, assigning him to manage the bank's European Union Common Market financial planning activities. This required him to move to Germany; their Munich offices coordinated most of those activities for northern Europe. After the year's assignment was complete, Duncan would assume his new management position in London, working in the bank's Common Market division handling the bank's financial activities in all of Europe, as well as the bank's activities related to the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the E.U.

Tom had become an avid bicyclist after several years of riding with his dad and his brother Andrew and had continued to keep his brother company on Andrew's morning runs. Lynette, wanting to share in everything her step-brother did, also had begun bicycling and running with him and thus, soon after they had settled into their Munich rental—the bank had arranged a one-year rental of a house in the Hasenberg district of north Munich, convenient to the school that the three children would attend—the step-siblings began taking extended bicycle rides in the city.

On a warm day in late August, a week before classes at their school were to begin, Tom and Lynette decided to bicycle out to Feldmochinger See Park, a city park with a large lake located about five miles from their home. They took a light blanket to sit on and packed lunches. Then they set out on their bike ride.

After arriving at the park, they found a scenic spot and spread out their blanket. The spot they had chosen was on a lawn overlooking the lake. While watching boaters on the lake, joggers passing by, and kids playing on the lawn, they ate their lunches. After an hour of relaxing in the warm sun, they decided to pack up so that they could ride around the lake and explore the park.

When they rode around to the lake's southern shore, Tom pointed to a sign which had an arrow pointing in the direction they were traveling.

“Look, Linnie, it says we're headed to ‘FKK-Bereich,’ what's that? I don't remember that word *bereich*.”

“I know *bereich*, it means ‘area,’ but not what those initials are,” she responded.

They topped a small rise and looked up ahead. Tom suddenly felt faint and, quickly stopping, he almost fell off his bike. Lynette looked at him in alarm; she saw that his face had turned pale.

“Oh shit,” he breathed as he tried to quell his rising panic. “There's naked people there!”

He turned the bike around and tried to cycle away, but was too unsteady to continue to ride, so he got off and ran with it, wheeling it along the path back over the rise of the little slope, away from



*Tom sees a nudist gathering at the Munich FKK area of the park*

the grassy beach area. Lynette followed him, very concerned.

“Tom? You okay?” she called.

He stopped a hundred yards up the path and sank to the ground as Lynette came up to him. She jumped off her bike and threw her arms around Tom. He was pale and breathing hard.

“Tom, does that naked stuff still scare you?” she asked softly. “Like when you were little?”

He nodded. “Yeah. Oh, Lynnie, why does that happen to me?” he asked plaintively. “It’s like I can’t breathe—I get dizzy and feel all tight in my chest.”

“It’s scary for you, I guess,” she said. “Your face has no color at all.” She touched his forehead. “And it’s clammy. Wait. I have an idea.”

She pulled a small towel out of her saddlebag and biked back to the lake where she got it wet. Then she returned to Tom and rolled the towel up into a compress to place on his forehead.

“Oh god, thanks,” he breathed. “That feels so good, sis.”

“Let’s rest here for a few minutes and then do you think you can ride home?”

“Yeah... seeing that was a shock... wasn’t expecting anything like that...” he shuddered.

Lynette giggled. “Well, I thought it was so cool... all those guys and their things just hanging out and jiggling... wow...”

“Oh god, please, Lynnie, don’t do that to me,” Tom pleaded. “I’m gonna ask Mom why seeing naked people still bothers me.”

“Maybe ‘cause it was unexpected?” Lynette ventured.

Tom just shrugged. After a while he felt steady enough to ride and they left for home.

Duncan and Angela were home when the kids rode up. Tom was wearing a haggard expression and Duncan noticed.

“What’s wrong, Tom?” he asked. “Everything okay? You didn’t get hurt, did you?”

“No, Dad. But there were naked people in the park when we went riding around the lake. I got that panicked feeling when I saw them.”

Lynette broke in, “His face went all white and he got too weak to ride.”

“Lynnie got me a wet towel and put it on my face,” Tom said proudly. “That really helped.”

Angela nodded. “That was exactly the right thing to do, Lynette. Good for you.”

She blushed and nodded. Then she said, “Oh, maybe you know... just before we came to the naked people area, there was a sign, it said... um... *FFK Bereich*, I think. Do you know what the abbreviation is? *Bereich* means ‘area,’ I know.”

Angela chuckled. “Oh dear. Duncan, remember the brochures we got when you got your Munich assignment? One of them was about the public parks. One big park here is the Englischer Garten, the English Garden ...”

“Why ‘English Garden,’ Mom?” Lynette asked.

“Let me find that brochure...” She went to the desk, took out a folder, and flipped through the brochures in it. “Ah, here it is. Let’s see. Oh, it’s the biggest urban park in the world... wow, it even has a surfing area. Look, surfers can ride a big wave on a river there. Okay, ‘English’ because it wasn’t laid out like a formal French garden but more in the landscape style of English parks. Ah. Here’s what I thought I remembered seeing. Lots of German parks are popular with nudists. That’s what I recalled reading; I read that all the German parks have nudist areas. So, Lynette, those initials are actually ‘FKK’ and stand for ‘Freikörperkultur’; it means ‘free body culture,’ and it’s the German term for nudism or naturism.”

Lynette was wide-eyed as she listened; then she asked, “You mean, people like to just go around naked?”

Angela smiled. “It’s true. Most people in Europe are very tolerant of public nudity. Lots of parks and many beaches have nudist areas. In fact, according to this flyer, here in Munich, it looks like there’s maybe a half dozen public areas where nudity is allowed. Parks mostly, but we’ll look into where the areas are so Tom can avoid them and doesn’t get another shock, okay?”

“But why Tom reacts that way, we still don’t know,” Duncan remarked. “His doc said he might outgrow it, so maybe as you get older, son, it’ll get better.”

“I sure hope,” Tom grumbled. “Feeling like that just sucks...”

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When school in Munich began, Tom learned that pupils were required to shower after physical education classes. Unable to undress with the other boys and shower with them, he simply skipped showering—he even skipped being in the locker room when the showers were being used—but his skipping them was quickly noticed by the teachers.

“Mr Armstrong?” a teacher called one day as Tom was heading out of the gym, intending to

dress and get out of the locker room before the boys began showering. Tom went over to the teacher.

“We’ve noticed you don’t shower. We expect that all of you pupils will shower after physical activity. Now get in there and take one!” he ordered.

Tom acted like he was going into the locker room, but instead slipped out of the main gym door. He circled around to the boys’ locker room door to the hall and went in. He couldn’t see the showers from his locker, but still, there were some boys undressing... Averting his eyes, he got to his locker, opened it, took out his clothes, and ran out to the hall. Using a boys’ rest room down the hall, he changed back into his school uniform.

At his next gym class, the teacher was waiting for him.

“You’re still not showering,” the teacher told him. “When the class is over, I’m going to take you into the locker room and watch to make sure you shower.”

So a few minutes before the class ended, Tom slipped away unnoticed and changed back to his school clothes in the nearby boys’ room. Later that day he was called to the headmaster’s office. The gym teacher was waiting there.

“Mr Armstrong,” the headmaster said, “Mr Gronile tells me you cut gym class.”

“Sir, I was there; I just left a minute or so early to change.”

“Young man, leaving early is still a cut. Why did you leave early?”

“Mr Gronile told me he was gonna bring me into the lockers and make me shower. I can’t do that.”

The headmaster looked sharply at Tom. “And just why can’t you? What’s wrong with showering with the other boys? Next time, Mr Gronile will make sure that you go in with him.”

“NO! I just can’t do it. I get panicky,” Tom gasped, now beginning to feel that awful constricting band starting to squeeze his chest. He had already begun to turn pale and now, his legs rubbery, he stumbled, dropping into a nearby chair.

Both teachers jumped with alarm. “Are you okay?” Mr Gronile cried as he saw Tom turn white-faced and begin to fold into himself.

Tom leaned over and took a number of deep, shuddering breaths. His color began to return.

“It’s passing now,” Tom said weakly. “I can’t stand to see naked people. I panic. I can’t help it.”

The two adults exchanged glances.

“Hmmm... Mr Gronile, what do you recommend?” the headmaster asked.

“Tom needs to see the nurse,” he answered. “Then the counselor. With his parents.”

“And gym class?”

“Well... maybe it's an excuse for now... but wait, we have a swimming requirement that...”

“Oh, no! I can't do swimming!” Tom exclaimed.

Both adults' heads swung around to look at him.

“I almost drowned. I will NOT go in the pool to swim, EVER!” he said emphatically. “I almost died.” he softly said.

“Yes, definitely the counselor,” the headmaster agreed.

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Tom's parents met with the counselor a few days later and they explained to her a little of Tom's history and his prior psychological assessments. After some discussion about his P.E. class expectations and swimming, they agreed to have a psychiatrist speak to Tom. Soon they had set up an appointment and had copies of his medical records sent from Canada. Tom's parents told the psychiatrist that Tom had been exempted from swimming in Canada based on his doctor's recommendation, and his gym teachers had never insisted that Tom shower after classes.

After Tom had several appointments with the psychiatrist, the doctor met with Duncan and Angela.

“I agree with his prior therapist, both in diagnosis and in attempting any treatment. I agree that he's still too young for cognitive behavioral therapy, as his former therapist noted in his record. So I'll be recommending to the school that Tom not be forced to shower. Tom's gymnophobia continues to be extremely severe and extends to seeing nudity as well as the threat of his experiencing personal nudity. With a reaction so severe, I believe that forcing him to do something which his body so strongly rejects could cause some completely unstable behavior in addition to precipitating a panic attack. I will urgently recommend to the school that they not put Tom in that situation. I'll also recommend against requiring swimming. I'll ask that the school place these recommendations into Tom's permanent school records.”

As Tom reflected on his recollections of his year in Munich, he drifted off into an uneasy nap on the nurse's cot.

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Angela picked up Tom from the school nurse's office and was able to get an emergency appointment with a psychological crisis center therapist that afternoon. She had obtained a note from the school nurse which contained her physical findings and observations, so the psychologist was able to get the physician on call to order a prescription for a strong anti-anxiety medication and an antidepressant. The doctor warned them that the anxiety medication's full effect might take two or perhaps three days to build up and at least a week or two for the antidepressant to become effective.

On Tuesday, Tom returned to school. Lynette wanted to arrive early and rode her bike but Tom was too unsteady to ride after starting the drugs; they made him dizzy and unable to concentrate.

Angela dropped Tom off, but he asked her to let him out on the opposite side of the building from where the Program pupils would be undressing. The weather was still warm enough that Program pupils would do this outside; when it was inclement or too cold, the head teacher's instructions had mentioned that the school commons area was to be used.

Tom had decided that he would wait until the final bell was about to ring before he'd venture into the halls, so he stayed near the school's side door and slipped into home room just as the bell rang. He was relieved to see that there wasn't anyone naked in his home room.

Lynette looked at him and mouthed, "Are you okay?"

He just shrugged in response.

During home room, Tom and Lynette were summoned to the counselor.

"I was unable to see you last Friday," she told them. "There are several forms that your parents haven't completed." She gave them two envelopes. "Please return these to the office tomorrow. Now let me review your classes from Germany and be sure you're caught up with our curriculum here. You both have identical records. Were you always in the same classes?"

"Yes, miss." ... "Yes, ma'am, we were."

She went over their schedules and finally dismissed them to their first class as the end-of-period bell rang.

When Tom and Lynette arrived at their first-period class, they saw an unhappy naked boy and girl standing in the front of the room. Tom whirled around and stumbled out with Lynette running after him. She followed him into the boys' bathroom—she figured that with the Program running now, Program girls were supposed to use the boys' rooms anyway, so what the hell; she could be in there too.

"I can't do it, Linnie, I just can't," Tom moaned as she held him as he held a wad of wet paper towels on his forehead. "The pills aren't really helping me. I feel so wiped out, really dizzy. Not like myself. But I still began to panic when I saw them."

"Probably 'cause the pills haven't really kicked in yet," she replied. "Let's see the nurse in case there are side effects, you know, what Mom said the pharmacy told her to watch for."

"Okay."

The nurse checked Tom over and proclaimed him okay, she thought that he was simply zoned out on his body's adapting to the medications. Then she inquired about Tom's sleep the prior night.

"Terrible," he answered. "I had all kinds of nightmares. Kept waking me."

The nurse recommended that Tom go home and get some sleep, so she called Angela who came to the school again and picked her son up. Soon after they returned home and while Tom was napping, Angela got a call from the school. The head teacher had heard about Tom and wanted to

know how he was doing.

“Well, let me say, Dr Taylor, not well, not well at all. Isn't there any way you can put him in classes without naked kids? He can't tolerate seeing nudity and he's had that problem since he was little.”

“Mrs Armstrong, there aren't any such classes this week and besides, every week there's a different Program group taking different classes,” he responded. “The nurse told me that she recommended that Tom get medication to help.”

“Yes, he's taking them. And he's walking around like a robot. I'm sure that that stuff is doing nothing to help his learning and little to control his panicking,” Angela retorted angrily.

“Hmmm, perhaps when his body gets used to the drugs...”

Angela made an annoyed sound. “Not likely. The doc told us that there was a very good chance that they wouldn't help at all. He said that they would only blunt his panic response, not eliminate it. But I'm also really concerned because I've been told that the anti-anxiety med he's taking is really addictive, and can have some possibly nasty side-effects, so I won't keep him on it too long and of course we're back to his panicking again. Listen, there must be a way to help Tom avoid this situation. Let me fill you in a little on what happened to him in the past so you have a better idea of how long he's had this problem. Do you have a couple of minutes?”

Taylor told her to continue.

Angela began, “We first learned about Tom's affliction—he has a serious phobia about seeing nudity and his personally experiencing even partial nudity. It was quite severe even when Tom was about 10 or 11 years old; that's when my husband and I noticed a few problems which really concerned us. When we began noticing his aversion to being less than fully dressed, among other things we had seen, we had a psychologist evaluate him and that's when we learned about the full extent of his problem; he was diagnosed with a known phobia.”

Angela thought back to the events in Tom's past and began to relate a quick summary of his history to Taylor.

“Briefly, here's what happened when Tom was in grade school. We couldn't get him to be shirtless anywhere, like at the beach or even in the doctor's office. And we saw him panic when we tried to have him take a shower in a male facility at a water park. His doctors told us that this was a phobia which couldn't be treated until we knew its cause or until he was an adult and old enough to try the usual therapy methods.”

“I'm sorry to hear that, Mrs Armstrong,” Taylor began to respond, and Angela's memories returned to when she was dealing with Tom's developing phobia.

### Chapter 3

Eleven year old Tom slowly walked into Dr Jeffries' reception room, followed by his parents. After they checked in, the three sat in a corner of the room.

"I'm nervous," Tom sighed.

Angela took his hand. "Hey. Nothing to worry about, honey. She'll just talk to us, okay? Ask some questions, ask about things that you remember. Just try to remember and answer what you can, okay?"

"I guess..."

Angela looked at her husband. "Duncan, our appointment was for an hour and a half, right?"

"True—I think it's a long appointment—maybe because it's his first visit. Ah, just heard a door close, so I guess we're next."

In another minute, the receptionist called them. "Dr Jeffries asks that Mr and Mrs Armstrong go in first. Tommie will be okay waiting out here for a few minutes."

They rose and Duncan laid his hand on Tom's shoulder. "You good, sport? Hang in there; we won't be long."

Tom smiled faintly. "Sure, Dad, I'm okay." He held up the tablet with his game in progress.

Duncan gripped his shoulder, gave it a little shake, and grinned. "Good man."

When the adults entered Dr Jeffries' office, she rose to shake their hands. After a few brief pleasantries, she remarked, "Dr Gleason sent over some notes from Tommie's records; he's written that Tommie is excessively shy about body exposure. He's tried to talk to Tommie about it and says that Tommie seems to know that his extreme reluctance to be unclothed with anyone is unusual and Tommie appears to be concerned about it too. Dr Gleason notes that he resists taking off his shirt for his exams, for example."

"Correct," Duncan agreed, "He won't take off the shirt at the beach either, or even around home when it's hot. We recently had an experience at an amusement park that triggered our request for an evaluation."

"Hmmm, we'll get to what happened there in a few minutes; first I'd like to go in order and hear about any prior examples of his modesty, to see if there may be any changes over time, and later I'll talk to Tommie about them. Just so you know, kids Tommie's age sometimes do have problems with modesty but in his case, it appears to be more severe, perhaps involving some body-image issues. The most common problems like this happen with the onset of puberty but from Dr Gleason's notes, he's not there physically yet. Let's start—personal modesty issues can be associated with social interaction problems. How is he in school? Any reports of his not participating in class, like avoiding verbal presentations or not asking questions?"

Angela shook her head. "Not at all; he's a good student and the teachers say he participates quite

well. He had a big social studies project with two classmates finish last week and they got an 'A' on their presentation."

"Oh, good. What about in social settings? How does Tommie interact with peers?"

Angela nodded. "Well, he only has one real friend—someone who I'd say was a 'close' friend, another boy. He's the only kid who comes to our house. Maybe he doesn't have more friends because he and his sister—stepsister actually—are so close. They're always together."

"His sister is...?"

"Lynette." Angela offered.

"Lynette is how old?"

"Almost eleven; same age as Tommie; in fact he was born December 10 and she on the twelfth."

Dr Jeffries nodded. "And how is Tommie with you and other family members? Well behaved? Any unusual behavioral problems?"

"No," both parents shook their heads. "He's a good kid. Does his schoolwork and chores without much complaint. Um, usually," Angela grinned.

"Is he modest with you at home too? Like when bathing or just lounging around?"

Duncan shrugged. "I guess. He never appears out of his room unless he's fully dressed. I rarely see him wearing his pajamas—and then only in his bedroom. He won't let his brother or me into the bathroom with him."

"Does he get along with his brother? How old is he?"

Angela smiled. "Andrew is 13—almost exactly two and a half years older. Andrew dotes on his little brother. He's very protective of him. And Tommie loves him fiercely."

Duncan nodded. "After my ex-wife left us, when Tommie was two, Andrew sort of took on the role of his brother's protector."

Dr Jeffries made some notes. "May I ask why their mother left?"

"Um, no problem," Duncan responded. "We met in college; she was a communications major but was really into theater and acting in school performances. After graduating, she got into the local community theater and was quite good, actually. But she wanted to spread her wings and see if she could go pro. There wasn't much in Toronto for her; she wanted the big time, like Hollywood. Her friends, and also the directors of the plays she was in, told her she wasn't at Hollywood level but she wouldn't hear it. My own career opportunities relied on my staying here; I couldn't think of relocating to the west coast of the U.S. for the remote chance that she'd succeed, and my moving there would net the family a huge pay cut. She was also... how should I put it ... very self-centered—I guess that's kind of common in actors... and... um... really wasn't a very good mom to the kids. She kind of made it clear that they were a drag on her. She became very... ah... distant, both to the kids and me, and we parted before our sixth anniversary. Um...

she wasn't abusive, if you were going to ask that, just very aloof with the kids... and me."

"You're saying that your sons didn't really have the influence of a loving mother."

Duncan nodded his head. "Not at all. But I tried to give them as much love as I could, despite her coldness toward them."

Angela broke in, "Duncan is incredible with the boys—with my daughter too. It's what drew me to him. They all confide in him about everything; makes me a bit jealous at times," she grinned. "They go to him first 'cause he's kind of a softie but he listens to them so well."

"You mentioned that your daughter..." Dr Jeffries consulted her notes, "Lynette... and Tommie are close. Your kids first met when the two of you met?"

"Pretty much," Duncan agreed. "When we saw that the two of us were clicking, we began to have some 'family outings' all together." He made finger quotes. "Lynette and Tommie, well, they seemed to gravitate together. You'd assume they were twins, they think so much alike."

"So tell me, before the amusement park incident which you say triggered your seeking help, what prior instances of his modesty can you recall?"

Duncan leaned back in his seat. "This also was earlier this summer. Here's what happened. You'll recall how really hot it was then..."

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"Hey Mom, Lynette and I wanna go play in the park, okay?" Tom called.

"Just a minute, young man, remember your dad mentioned at dinner last night that he wanted you to help him and Andrew with the lawn?"

"Oh, gee, yeah. I forgot, sorry. Aww..."

Lynette came downstairs. "I heard, Mom. It's okay, Tommie; say, I'll stay home and help you. Can I, Mommie? I already finished my own chores. Maybe we'll finish quicker so we can go to the park?"

Tom turned to her. "Would you help too? Super! Thanks!" He hugged her.

Angela nodded, "Okay, but only if your dad says you can. He should be back from his errand with Andrew any time now."

Within a few minutes, Duncan pulled into the drive and Tom ran out to the car.

"Hi there, sport," Duncan called. "Ready to get started?"

"Yeah Dad... Lynette said she'd help so-if-we-get-done-quick-can-we-go-to-the-park?" Tom asked in a rush.

Duncan turned to Andrew. "What 'ya say, son? If they work hard, can we let them go?" He winked.

“Sure, Dad,” Andrew smiled. “Not a problem.”

“Okay, you two.” Duncan looked at the ten-year-olds. “I’m on the rider mower and Andrew is using the push mower where the rider won’t go. Tommie, you’ve used the string trimmer before, so you’ll do that. And Lynette, can you do around the edges? Using clippers and this spade here?”

“Yeah, Dad,” she nodded.

Soon they all were at work and before an hour was up, so was the temperature, and Duncan and Andrew had removed their shirts; Lynette was just wearing a bathing suit top with her shorts. When Duncan rode past Tom, he stopped and looked at him. Tom was trimming the grass near a tree, wearing goggles, a tee-shirt, and shorts and sweating profusely.

“Hey, guy,” Duncan called to him, “it’s almost 34 degrees [93 degrees F] now and getting hotter! Look how you’re sweating! Take off your shirt, son, and you need to put on your cap, too.”

Tom stopped the trimmer. “Um, I’m okay, Dad.”

Duncan got off the rider. “I mean it, son. It’s hot. You need to cool off—you could get heat stroke, you know.” He reached for Tom, who pulled away.

“No, Dad! I’m okay! I’ll... uh, just get some water—and a hat.”

He ran off to the house and returned several minutes later. When his father looked again, Tom had a cap on but was still in his shirt, so he swung around to him again.

“Aren’t you taking off the shirt?” he called.

“No! I can’t,” Tom responded.

Lynette ran up to them. “Dad, please don’t yell at Tommie; he has to leave his shirt on. Please don’t make him take it off, he can’t do it!”

“What’s this?” Duncan muttered. Aloud he asked, “Lynette, what do you know about Tommie’s shirt? Why he won’t take it off?”

She looked at Tom. “He’s scared or somethin’, Dad.” Tom nodded. “He told me he gets bad feelings if he has no shirt on. He won’t take it off at any time.” Tom nodded again.

Duncan shook his head. “Okay, but I don’t want you to get overheated, son—say, take the hose and wet your shirt—is that okay, sport? That should cool you off a bit.”

Tom nodded and smiled. “Thanks, Dad.”

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Duncan finished his recollection, “I told Angela about it later, and she told me she’s noticed that Tommie never goes without a shirt.”

Angela nodded, “I had a similar experience about a week earlier when I took Lynette and

Tommie to the beach. It was another pretty hot day. When we got there, it was past noon and the temperature was already pushing 32 degrees [90 degrees F]. We were wearing our suits under our clothes, so we took them off, except Tommie kept his shirt on. I asked him if he was planning to go in the water wearing his shirt and he said he was. I couldn't convince him to take it off and Lynette came to his defense then too.

"Oh, that reminds me; at the neighborhood pool too, he keeps his shirt on. And we've tried to give him swimming lessons but he refuses. He's content to just stay in the shallow end. I know why he's afraid of the water; he almost drowned when he was eight when some kids pushed him into the pool."

"Oh really—what happened then?" Dr Jeffries asked.

Angela responded, "He was at the municipal pool with two of his school friends back then and the mom of one of them. Some older kids, maybe 11 or 12 years old and known bullies, as we found out later, began teasing the three 8 year olds, and then they threw Tommie into the deep end of the pool. The deck was crowded and the kids—his friends—didn't know Tommie couldn't swim but when they didn't see him pop up in the water, they got help. He got pulled out but he wasn't conscious; he had swallowed a lot of water and the lifeguard had to pump it out of him. Getting water in the lungs is really serious! Tommie was in the hospital for three days."

"Oh my. How was he after that experience?" Dr Jeffries asked.

"Anxious. Withdrawn," Duncan said. "We got him some therapy, that got him to go back into the water and he got used to it, but he won't go near water above his waist. He still refuses to learn to swim. The therapist told us when he's a teen, he'll probably agree to learn then. I think it's a high school requirement anyway."

"Perhaps he will agree to learn," Dr Jeffries mused. "I think that was good, to expose him to getting back into the water so quickly.... And you mentioned an amusement park incident; one that was the main impetus for bringing Tommie to be seen about his modesty, right?"

"Correct. Let me set the scene; this was about a month ago. We were visiting that big park, you know, Canada's Wonderland. There was a swimming pool and the kids wanted to use it and unlike the water rides, bathing suits and showers were required. So we told the kids that they needed to go to the locker room to shower and put their suits back on before going in the water. Angela was with Tommie and Andrew and she pointed them to the locker room....

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"Go ahead, dear. Andrew will go with you," Angela said. "You have to take a shower with soap, it's the rule here."

Tom frowned. "Um. I changed my mind. I don't want to go in the water."

Andrew looked at his anxious brother. "It's okay, trooper, they probably have shower stalls for privacy. I'll be with you and watch out for you."

He reached his hand out and Tom reluctantly took it; then they walked to the locker room. Entering the room, Tom looked around. One half of the room had small lockers and the rest was filled with rows of showers, ten heads along each wall and four heads on each one of four posts which stood in a row down the room's center. There were about a dozen men and boys showering in the room.

"Andy—wait," Tom stammered, covering his eyes. "Look, I... it's all open! It's a big room and the showers are... uh, it's all open... no curtains..." He turned away from the showers, still holding his hands over his eyes, and started to cry.

"Oh, okay, you're right," Andrew replied as he looked at the large open shower area. He noticed several shower heads in one far corner of the room; none were occupied. "Look there, bro, you can shower in the far corner there and I'll stand in front of you and hide you, okay?"

Andrew looked at his brother, who had a distressed, no, it was a panic-stricken, look on his face. Tom looked like he was about to throw up.

"No! No... I ca... can't d... d... do it, Andy," he stuttered and sunk to the floor.

"Sure you can... you can be brave, guy, right? I'll even hold my towel in front of you, see, like this, okay?" he said, spreading the towel widely.

Tom, sitting on the floor, peered up at his brother and then glanced at the corner shower. Andrew shook the towel temptingly but Tom shook his head and looked down again.

"How's about if I shower and change first? You can hold the towel for me, then you'll see there's nothing scary, okay?"

"Um... maybe... I guess..."

Andrew held his hand down and Tom took it, allowing himself to be pulled to his feet.

"I *am* so scared, Andy."

Andrew looked at his brother; his face was ashen and he was trembling.

"Let's go over there, trooper," Andrew urged, and started to draw Tom over to the far shower while Tom was trying to cover his eyes.

A man showering near them called as they approached the shower area, "Say kids, you need to get the clothes off *before* you come in the showers, you know."

Tom pulled his hand out of Andrew's, turned, and blindly retreated to the locker area where he dropped onto a bench, bent over, and wrapped his arms around his thighs. Andrew came over to him and squatted down.

"Hey, guy... you okay?" Tom shook his head. Andrew put his hand on Tom's back; he was trembling violently. "Hey, I think I changed my mind too, bro, maybe I'll go in the water later," Andrew said softly to him. "Let's go back out, okay?"

Tom looked up, his cheeks were streaked with tears. "C... can w... we go? Th... thank you!"

When they returned to their parents, Duncan gave them a questioning look. "What's up, guys?"

Tom looked at the ground while Andrew whispered to his dad, "Um... the modesty, Dad. He had a meltdown. The showers are all in the open; there's no private area."

Duncan squatted down in front of Tom; then his mother, who quickly whispered something to Andrew, came over.

"Hey, son," Duncan asked, "how're you doing? We kind of assumed that there'd be some privacy in the showers but there wasn't, huh?"

"No, Dad... I'm sorry... I just... can't... too scared to even take off my shirt. My heart's pounding; I couldn't breathe and felt like throwing up... what's wrong with me?" he wailed. "Why does that happen?"

Duncan held him in a hug. "Something's scared you badly, Tom. Your body is just reacting to that scare. I'm not sure why, so... why don't we ask Doc Gleason about it? You need to see him for your school physical; that's next week. Say, feeling better now? You wanna hit some of the rides now? Okay for that?"

"I guess... You think Doc Gleason can help?" Tom asked.

His parents exchanged glances. "He can help," his mother said softly, but mouthed to her husband, "I hope."

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"So he panicked in there?" Dr Jeffries asked.

"Yeah, that's what Andrew told us. His face was pale and he was still trembling when we saw him come out." Duncan told her. "Andrew also told me that when Tommie saw the people in the showers, he averted his eyes, covering them like he didn't want to see them."

"Hmmm. That fits with your description of his other reactions, too. Okay, one last question before we invite Tommie in. Are you aware of any sexual abuse or contact, say from a friend or relative?"

Tom's parents looked at each other. Duncan answered, "No, there isn't anything we're aware of. Tommie's never stayed overnight anywhere and has only one friend he's close with. I don't see how anything like that could happen, do you, honey?"

Angela shook her head. "No. Except for the modesty, Tommie seems very happy and not needlessly afraid of situations, other than being in deep water, that is."

Dr Jeffries finished writing and looked up. "Let's fetch Tommie now, okay?"

Tom took a seat between his parents and Dr Jeffries introduced herself. Then she smiled at him and began asking him about his school, friends, favorite activities, music, and his siblings,

drawing him out and getting him to relax. Then she sat back, and catching his eye, grinned at him.

“So Tommie, sounds like you like school and have a nice time with your activities too. And your mom and dad have been telling me how good you are, both in school and at home, that you love your brother and sister, and do all your chores. So whatever do you need to talk to me about? You seem to be a perfect kid!”

His parents chuckled.

Tom looked at them both. “Um... did they say... about... ah, I’m scared... to be undressed...?”

“Yes, they told me what happened, but I’d like to know what you think about that too. Are you okay talking about that with your parents here?”

He nodded, shrugging. “They’re okay being here.”

“Good, tell me how you feel when you’re undressed when you’re alone?”

“Um, I don’t think I really know... um, when I’m alone I guess I don’t even think about it.”

“But if Dad is around, then how do you feel?”

“I’m not undressed if he’s there.”

“Could you get undressed if he were there, though? Are you okay talking about this? And with Mom here?”

“Um, yeah. I, ah, um, don’t really know... oh, well, when Andrew and I were in a shower room at the amusement park... ah, I think if we were both alone, I could get undressed then... but there were people... um...” His face turned bright red and he couldn’t continue.

Dr Jeffries nodded. “So someone in your family, then, if it was your brother or father, you could be undressed?”

“Um, maybe, I guess...” He looked very tense.

“Tell me what happened at the amusement park, if you can.”

Tom described his locker room experience.

“Can you describe how you felt then, Tommie, right before you decided to leave the room without showering?”

“Unh, well, like I was dizzy, you know? My heart was pounding and I couldn’t catch my breath—like I was running, I guess. Chest hurt. Oh, it felt like I was gonna throw up.”

“How do you feel right now, talking about it?” Dr Jeffries asked. “Do you have the same feelings?”

“It’s okay, I don’t, but I feel a little nervous,” Tom acknowledged. “But feeling like that in the pool shower scared me. I, um... don’t know why I get that way, but I feel scared that somethin’

bad'll happen if I take off my clothes.”

“Do you mind if I ask you about other times when you couldn't take off your clothes—like your shirt at Dr Gleason's office?” He shook his head. “How did you feel at Dr Gleason's office?”

“He... no, I like him, he's really nice, but when he asked, I got scared, like I wanted to run out, away from him. It made me feel bad, but he said he could examine me even with my shirt on. Then I felt better.”

Dr Jeffries continued to question Tom gently, then asked for a few minutes alone with him, so his parents left the room.

“Tommie, now I'm going to ask you some really personal, sensitive questions and I'll be the only person ever to know your answers, so you can be honest and I'll keep your secrets. Is that okay?”

“Uh huh...” He looked at her questioningly.

“Tommie, how do you feel about yourself? Do you think you're a happy person, or a sad one—I mean, do you look forward every day to doing exciting things, or it doesn't really matter what happens each day?”

“Oh, no, I pretty much have fun every day... um, except when I have a test at school. They're no fun,” he giggled.

“But you don't mind the tests...?”

“Oh, they're all right. I do okay, I guess,” he answered.

“That's good. Does doing anything give you too much stress—you know what I mean, right? Like the stress, or anxiety, you feel about being undressed, okay? Anything else stress you, like being alone with someone, even a family member, or being in a certain place?”

“Mmmm, no... you mean, do I feel like I don't want to be there?”

“Well, like you said when you were with Dr Gleason. When you said you wanted to run out of the room.”

“Oh. No, well, when I'm playing ball, I stress out about getting a hit—is that what you mean? I'm not as good as some other kids...”

“No, that's actually a good kind of stress, Tommie. It makes you want to play better. I'm talking about a stress that makes you feel bad.”

“Okay, then, no. I can't think of anything like that.”

“Has anyone ever threatened or hurt you where you're now afraid of them, or touched you inappropriately? You do know about 'inappropriate touching,' right?”

Tommie shook his head. “No, never had any bad touching. Um, when I was little, some kids threw me in the pool and I almost drowned, so now I'm scared of deep water. Is that what you mean?”

Dr Jeffries nodded. "Something like that. Are you afraid of being where that can happen again, Tommie? Like being near a pool where kids can do that to you again?"

"Um, no, never thought about that, you know? I'm bigger than most kids my age now and can take care of myself," he said proudly. "I'm not afraid of being bullied now. I wrestle with Andrew and I can almost pin him," he grinned.

"So you don't recall anything that makes you so anxious that you can't get undressed around other people?" she asked.

"No. I just get scared and don't know why," he responded sadly.

"Do you have any questions, Tommie? Is there anything else you want to tell me?"

"No. Can't think of anything except why I feel that way."

"Well, we'll try to find out something more the next time we talk about it, okay? Let's get your folks back; I want to chat with them for a minute, so please ask them to come in, and wait for us out there for a bit; sound okay?"

"Sure."

Tom left the room and the Armstrongs returned, looking at Dr Jeffries with anticipation.

She invited them to sit and smiled at them. "Cute kid. He's sweet, smart too. Okay, he didn't tell me much more than you folks did, except that my chat with him confirmed that he had a classic panic reaction when he and his brother were in that locker room. The other times you described, he was exhibiting anxiety; he possibly was close to panic then too. The amusement park episode wasn't just a severe anxiety attack, mom and dad, the description of how Tommie reacted shows a classic panic reaction and implies that he has a phobia against being undressed. That's a known social phobia and has a name; it's called 'gymnophobia,' or fear of being naked—*gymnos* is Greek for 'naked.' Many times the panic reaction can happen when the person simply sees someone naked. Actually this phobia is not uncommon in children undergoing puberty but it usually results from a triggering cause like negative peer pressure, bullying, or the fear of exposing one's genitalia. There's a more serious social phobia—a social anxiety disorder—which has gymnophobia as one of its symptoms. Tommie certainly doesn't have that disorder. But none of the triggering causes appear to be operating here."

Duncan nodded. "Okay, so we now have a name for Tommie's condition. Is there a treatment or what?"

"Well, I'd like to see him for one or two more sessions. I'll explore his memories further; maybe he'll reveal something he hasn't mentioned yet. But he was very open with me today so I don't think I'll hear any surprises. Here's my opinion on treatment. The typical treatment for phobias is usually either something called 'cognitive behavioral therapy' or 'exposure therapy.' I think he's much too young for the former—you can look it up on the web. It involves doing exercises to alter the inappropriate patterns of thinking and results in changing the body's responses, in cases like Tommie's situation, to being unclothed. He's way too young for CBT; it probably works best

with a much older person—a late teen or a young adult. Exposure therapy might work, but again, without knowing the cause, the treatment might actually induce more trauma. That method is actually a structured form of cognitive behavioral therapy and involves putting the person into increasingly stressful situations and overcoming his fear by showing him, in a structured way, that being unclothed will not cause him physical harm.

“Exposure therapy works by desensitizing the person to being naked. But some therapists, myself included, believe that it’s actually important for the person to remain being ‘sensitive’ about the feelings one has about oneself, like when being undressed. The nudity phobia is triggered—that is, the physical phobia symptoms will appear—when the person is threatened by the idea of nudity; his body *senses* its change of status, like anticipating *being seen* naked or *seeing* others naked. That’s the triggering part, the body’s *sensing* a potential threat through vision or thought. The sensing then triggers the symptoms; it’s all done by the body with no thought processes involved. Desensitization actually works by training the body to *tolerate* its anxiety about the triggering condition, such as being naked, it doesn’t really remove the person’s anxiety—so it’s not a cure. Tolerance may *look* like a cure but could leave hidden problems or even cause others to develop. Follow so far?”

“Okay,” Angela nodded, “so what do you recommend?”

“I think he’s much too young for CBT. And while you could help him in doing the exposure therapy, where you’d gradually get him to accept being undressed in the presence of others, that almost certainly would not be a good idea either. We’d need to treat the underlying cause that originally triggered the phobia, or else I feel that by desensitizing him, we would be masking an unknown underlying problem. None of the usual causes seem to apply and Tommie appears to be otherwise a very well adjusted young person, so pushing him to do something which bothers him terribly might trigger an unwanted response, like resentment against you, which would be awful. I don’t see him trusting a stranger, a therapist like myself—and you should know that I’d never take on treating gymnophobia with exposure therapy with any male, let alone a boy. I strongly feel that it would have to involve a loving partner or someone very close like a parent. So unless we can learn the underlying cause, which would become the target of the therapy, my advice would be to wait until he’s much older. Just watch to be sure that this phobia doesn’t develop into other social problems, but that’s very unlikely. Perhaps he could even outgrow it. That happens too.”

“I see,” Duncan mused. “So you suggest that we don’t pressure him.”

“That’s correct. He’s not hurting himself, right? Perhaps something will happen where you’ll learn what triggered the phobia. Okay, let’s do appointments for another two sessions for Tommie alone, we’ll do 45 minutes the next two times. How’s next and the following Thursdays at 3:30?”

Ultimately the two remaining sessions with Dr Jeffries did not reveal the underlying cause of Tom’s phobia, so the Armstrongs decided to follow her advice and let him be comfortable being himself. They did get a note for his school, however, instructing that P.E. teachers should not

pressure him about his keeping his shirt on or not showering.

## Chapter 4

“So you’re saying that what’s happened with Tom has happened before,” Taylor was saying as Angela’s thoughts returned to the present.

“Absolutely. Furthermore, Tom had a second psychological evaluation done in Munich which supported the first doctor’s recommendations. I provided copies to the office of all of the doctors’ reports with my request for his exemption from being required to shower after P.E. I suspect that his panic in school the last two days was worsened because his exposure to nudity didn’t give him any quick way of avoiding it. The previous times, he could just retreat and the situation would disappear. In school, he didn’t have that option.

“So you see, Dr Taylor, we’ve known about Tom’s phobia for more than four years. And it’s apparently not getting any better; from what happened at the school, it appears that it may even be worse,” Angela summarized.

“Hmmm... I see,” Taylor mused. “I’ll need to discuss his situation with the counselor and our Program coordinator and get their recommendation for how we should approach his situation.”

“If you can do that, sir, I’d be very grateful; thanks.” She disconnected.

That evening, Lynette recalled the envelopes which the counselor had given to them. She brought them to her mother.

“These are from the counselor, Mom,” Lynette said. “One’s for Tommie. Remember, she wasn’t there when you brought us in to register.”

“Right, sweetie. Let’s see. Uh oh... Some kind of consent forms for that stupid naked program,” Angela said, scowling.

“What is it?” Lynette asked.

“One’s an acknowledgment that the parents are aware that our children will be required to participate and a waiver absolving the school from any incidents which occur that are not under their control. Like we’d ever agree to that. And a certification that the girl has had the birth-control and STD immunization within the past three months. Dad and I will be returning these with a letter saying we refuse to acknowledge any activity which has the potential of causing harm to our kids.”

“Oh jeez; thanks, Mom.”

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On Wednesday, Tom returned to school again. In the classes which had Program kids in the room, he sat in the back and kept his eyes covered, first using the brim of a cap, but after one teacher told him to take the cap off, that hats weren’t permitted, he just slumped down and read—or attempted to read—the textbook. He remained completely unresponsive to the teachers when they tried to call on him. The others in the classroom noticed Tom’s behavior but attributed it to his simply being an uncooperative kid; there were a number of them in school, after all.

Lynette, who sat near him, twice came to his defense, quietly explaining to the teacher that Tom was taking strong medications. Early on, in two of his classes where Tom was being unresponsive, those teachers sent him to the office, but Tom was quickly sent back with a note telling the teacher to let the boy stay; that the head teacher was aware of Tom's condition.

Tom had planned for his gym class by wearing his gym outfit under his normal clothes, so he didn't even go into the locker room; he changed in a toilet booth in the boys' room and stowed his regular school clothes in his locker, earning himself some puzzled stares from a few kids who noticed.

During class changes, Lynette became Tom's guide. She led him to each class and he simply followed her, averting his eyes so as not to see any of the hall activities involving the kids in the Program.

By Friday, his medications were beginning to have more of an effect. His senses were still considerably dulled, of course, but they had also taken the sharp edges off his anxiety. No longer did Tom feel extreme anxiety when he caught a glimpse of some nudity or heard the sounds of a relief session in front of the classroom. But instead of the feelings of panic which he had experienced earlier in the week, he was now feeling a sense of great dread, it was the sense of a threatening presence which always seemed to be looming nearby. It seemed to him to be like an evil darkness which was watching him hungrily. Now, when he got unavoidable glimpses of naked kids, his response was no longer one of a crushing panic; instead he felt a compulsion to flee in order to escape the constant physical threat that hovered just outside his perception. Tom didn't know it, of course, but he was developing paranoia. He wasn't aware that the hallucinations which were plaguing him could be one of the side effects of his medications.

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On Friday morning, Dr Taylor had scheduled a meeting with the school counselor, the Program coordinator, and the local Education Authority representative, to discuss Tom's situation. The Education Authority office in each local district was part of the government agency responsible for administration of the state-funded schools in the United Kingdom, and as such, the officials in these agencies were ultimately responsible for running the Naked in School Program in the schools. Taylor summarized Tom's situation for the group and he discussed what he recalled of Tom's history as Angela had related to him earlier in the week.

"That's what I've learned from speaking with the boy's mum. I also have some information from our nurse, who's treated him on several occasions, and it appears the boy does indeed get panic attacks. He's on medications now but his teachers tell me that he's been mostly unresponsive and inattentive in classes. He won't even lift his head to look at the teacher in any class where someone in the Program is present."

Miss Richardson, the counselor, added, "His mum's brought in a letter—I gave copies to the P.E. teachers—that says he's not to use the locker-room showers. I understand from the P.E. teachers that they've noticed that Tom wears his P.E. kit under his school clothes. They say he doesn't even use the locker room to change clothes; does it in the loo. Like a super-hero." She giggled.

“He changes in a red box, well, I guess a loo stall is almost like a box in the loo but they’re not red, there’s no windows, and there’s no phone.”

The others chuckled.

Taylor went on, “So I told the mum that we’d try to work out something so that Tom can more fully participate in school and that’s why we’re meeting. We do need to get Tom’s situation sorted, don’t we. I’d like to get some suggestions.”

Stuart Gray, the LEA official, spoke. “When the National Program Committee was developing the Program three years ago, I recall hearing a talk from their psychologist. She explained that the modesty and fear of exposure, anxieties, and all that rot which plagues our youth, is what the Program is designed to overcome, innit? I also recall something about treating phobias from my psych class back in my uni days—goodness, it’s almost twenty years ago, oh my—about, ahh, a kind of therapy that’s used.”

Richardson chipped in, “Exposure therapy.”

“Just so,” Gray agreed. “Something like when you expose a person afraid of heights to a high place and keep them there, they gradually get used to it because they see nothing bad happens. The Program shrink went on about methods of getting reluctant kids to overcome their fears and said that ideally, shy kids could be slowly acclimated to the idea of being naked. And she said good control over the situation was essential, controlling the pupils’ environment in the school, and also the Program, to protect them. We do that in schools now, don’t we; we prepare the pupils for facing the Program in their school by using introductory assemblies and having volunteers to start off—it gets pupils ready to face the time when it’s their turn. We do the week’s first disrobing in private—just the Program pupils—and we control the school environment by having very firm rules in place for the Program. So I believe that with the kind of issues that this pupil apparently has, perhaps you could somehow get him acclimated to nudity, by doing it very gradually? Much more gradually than usually done. Get him used to seeing nudity; then it’ll be normal for him, wouldn’t it. You’d have to find a way to start his Program participation in a controlled way, I’m sure, or else he’ll continue in his current behavior.”

“Sorry?” Miss Richardson asked. “Put him in the Program? That would be a dreadful shock to the boy, it would.”

Taylor looked at Gray. “Is what you’re recommending, Stuart, that we should put Tom in the Program? Really? How can that help him?”

Gray shot a hard glance at Richardson and then addressed the head teacher. “Many children put into the Program experience some degree of shock, don’t they. Some are quite frantic. It hasn’t killed anyone—well, I take that back. Those incidents were unfortunate. The children were not properly supervised, were they. Despite those problems, the Education Ministry strongly believes that this rampant teen modesty that we’ve seen recently has to be overcome to ensure psychological balance in their future adulthood. That’s the intent of the Program as I gathered from that Program shrink,” he declared, then shrugged. “Anyway, I’m sure you know that the

Program is supposed to make kids get used to overcoming any modesty issues, innit?"

Taylor turned to the Program coordinator. "You have anything to add, Janice? What do you think?"

Janice Dodson nodded. "Well, Stuart's theory seems good and I recall some things from my educational psych class. And unlike Stuart's class, mine was only three or four years ago. As well, the material we covered in my orientation as Program coordinator had a little psych stuff in it. Back in grad school, we saw good results from studies of controlled exposure treatments, as I recall. They used those fear of flying classes you see in adverts as an example, and in only a few sessions, the people who did the sessions were mostly cured. Well, cured enough to be able to take an airplane flight, anyway. Those sessions were supposed to take only three or four one-hour time blocks. If we put the boy in the Program, then after his spending one or two six-hour days naked, I'm quite convinced that he'd get over his difficulty with his public nudity aversion and everything else the kids need to do, wouldn't he."

Gray interrupted, "But remember, the Program shrink said the exposure has to be 'controlled.'"

Dodson shrugged. "Not sure how we could control what happens with one single pupil when the Program is running, unless someone is with him constantly..." she mused.

"Okay, I know. So we could control the events at the outset," Richardson offered. "For many of the children, it's a real shock for them to have to strip off for the first time in a group of pupils like they have to do. For this boy, it would have been really horrid for him if he had to strip publically like we had the kids do in the Monday's assembly, on stage in front of the entire school. That would really frighten him—wait, that's right, he panicked just watching, didn't he? Even if he had to strip off with a small group of other children watching, like we'll have the children doing starting on Monday, it would be a fright for him. So maybe we can do it in a controlled situation; we'd let the boy strip and get used to being naked alone. Have him undress privately and then have him wait for an hour or so with no other children around, just an adult to supervise. That will allow him to get used to being naked before he goes out. And yes, we shan't send him off into the hall straightaway when classes are changing; instead, let's bring him directly to his first classroom after the halls are empty. That will continue to keep him in a controlled situation, in a class with just a couple dozen pupils, all under close teacher supervision. Only after that adjustment period of several hours, will he need to go into the halls. Is that controlled enough?"

Dodson nodded. "Yes, quite. That's brilliant. As well, I'm sure that the boy'll be really reluctant, resistant probably, when he's told he has to get naked, so we should have a couple of teachers nearby to ensure that he strips, won't we?"

The group continued to discuss their plan for Tom's time in the Program for another few minutes and soon the details were finalized.

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It was Sunday afternoon in the Armstrong home and Tom was still hard at work trying to catch

up with all of the class work he had missed the previous week. Lynette was helping him, sharing her class notes, and trying to assist Tom when he got stuck. After a while, Tom begged for a rest.

“Lynnie, I’m reaching the end of my concentration,” he sighed. “My head’s buzzing and I can’t see straight anymore.”

Duncan overheard Tom and came into the room. “Hey sport, d’you still feel like a zombie now?”

“Aahhh, no, Dad. Still very tired; don’t sleep well. But I feel all tense... um, wound up, you know?—and like I get really annoyed when I can’t figure out something. Like a burning anger, I guess. And I can’t concentrate when I feel like that.”

“Hmmm... that sounds like it could be one of the pills’ bad side effects. I’ll look into that tomorrow. Maybe your dose is too high. When you think of being in classes with naked people, how do you feel about that now?”

Tom sat and thought for a dozen seconds. “Ugh. What it is—is dread, I think. Yeah. Danger. Darkness. Blackness just out of my sight. Oh god, I don’t know!” he moaned. “I don’t ever look at those kids. But I just had a memory of a stupid relief session I couldn’t help hearing. I didn’t watch it—couldn’t. But in my mind—ugh, the images of those kids being naked in front of everyone, with everyone watching. And then it seemed like there were these black eyes watching me out of this black cloud, hungry, waiting for... I don’t know what... for me to fall into that blackness around its eyes. But I don’t feel faint, it’s more like a feeling of rage. I have this constant anger that makes me want to fight back somehow. But there’s nothing to fight. But I’m so angry at how... how this is so unfair!”

Duncan was shocked. “*My god,*” he thought, *he sounds bad. Hallucinations? Gotta check on what those meds could be doing to him.*

Angela came in. “Tom, maybe you need a break; go take a nap. We’ll check with the docs on your dosages tomorrow, okay?”

Tom yawned. “You’re right, Mom, I’m really tired. Still don’t sleep too well.” He went off to his bedroom with Andrew, who was trying to calm Tom down.

Duncan sat down and took Lynette’s hand. “Thanks for watching out for Tom, sweetie. You’ve been his savior several times, you know. If Tom doesn’t mention it, it’s because he’s been so out of it.”

“Oh no, Dad. He thanks me all the time—it’s almost embarrassing. But I like to hear that he thinks I’m helping him.”

“You really are,” Angela agreed. “Say, Tom mentioned a ‘relief session’? Is that what I think it is?”

Lynette made a face. “Yeah. Sex stuff. A boy in the class had an erection—what a big one he had, I never knew they could be that big. Anyway, there was a naked girl in the class too; he asked her to help him and she put it in her mouth and sucked on him, making all kinds of really



Lynette describes the classroom fellatio performance she saw

nasty slurping and glugging and gulping sounds, while the guy was yelling ‘I’m cumming!’ He sprayed his stuff all over her face then and the class was shouting and applauding.”

“Good grief,” Angela said. “And Tom?”

“He was curled up in his seat trying to cover his ears, but he looked bright red. He was really, really angry!”

“Yeah, this isn’t good,” Duncan said. “I really need to talk to the doc.”

“How much of that ‘relief’ nonsense goes on in your classes?” Angela persisted.

“Well, almost every class. Girls get fingered to orgasms and a number of times a boy licked the girl down there until she screamed. Oh, one time a girl got another girl to do it to her. And Friday in lunch—there was a crowd around a lunch table so I couldn’t see—I was trying to get Tom away—but two kids were on a table... um... having... intercourse. I could hear their bodies slapping.”

“Oh my god—they allow that too?” Duncan exclaimed.

Lynette shrugged. “No one there to stop them. The thing called ‘reasonable requests’ is worse though. You have to allow kids to touch you so they stick their hands and fingers everywhere, even up girls’ fannies and arseholes.”

“Damn, that’s awful. Say, you’re picking up the Britishisms, aren’t you?” Angela shook her head.

“Mom? I couldn’t do any of that naked stuff, you know. If I got picked, I just couldn’t! You need to figure out how to get Tom out of it and help me too,” Lynette wailed, breaking down.

She grabbed her mother and sobbed on her shoulder. “I... *sniff*, *sob*... I... try to stay... *sniffle*... strong for Tommie... *sniff*... but it’s so bloody hard...”

Angela looked at Duncan, whose face hardened resolutely. “There must be schools where this abomination isn’t happening, like Andrew’s school. No Program there. Another thing to look

into tomorrow," he vowed.

Andrew returned from Tom's room. "Dad, you know my school will be starting it next fall, right? I'll be in uni then, thank god, but I heard that all government schools will have to have it by next school year."

"I didn't know that, son. Well, I'll see what we can do to help Tom."

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On Monday morning, Tom felt strong enough to ride his bike to school. He had slept fitfully again and still had an undefinable 'wound-up' feeling which didn't keep his feeling of dread from constantly bubbling to the surface. So the combination of those unpleasant sensations, exhaustion, tension, and dread, was keeping him on edge. Lynette rode with him but the two remained mostly silent, each lost in their own thoughts.

When they were a few blocks from school, Tom spoke tonelessly, "Today they pick random kids."

Lynette shuddered. "Yeah, I know."

"Lynnie, what if you..."

"Hush! There are what, maybe 800 kids? Not a good chance I'll get picked," she replied.

"Well, I'm just glad they have my P.E. letters that say I can't be in the showers 'cause I can't be naked with others. That will keep me from getting picked, so at least I don't have to worry about my name coming up," Tom mused. "But now I'm worried about you."

"Well, don't, Thomas Armstrong. And I can take care of myself so I can watch over you, bro."

They rode their bikes around to the teachers' parking area, away from the front of the school where the morning stripping shows were conducted and locked up their bikes in the bike rack there. Then they made their way to their home room.

"You did remember to bring in your missed work, right?" Lynette reminded Tom as they entered the classroom.

He looked at her and made a face. "That's only the fourth time you asked me that this morning, little mama," he joked.

"Hey, just checking! Last week you were so out of it. Good to see a little sense of humor back, Tommie."

They sat and waited for the bell as they quietly chatted.

After the bell rang and the teacher did the morning recordkeeping chores, she announced, "It's Program announcement time. Beginning with this week, the announcement of the selections of the week's Program students will be done in home room; each teacher has a list of the names of the chosen pupils to read."

You could hear a pin drop in the room now.

“I guess you’ll be pleased to hear that no one in this home room class is on the list this week.”

There was a huge sigh of relief, followed by cheering and applause.

“I do need to announce this other Program item, however. In the future, when your name is called, take your rucksack or bag to your locker and secure it there; then go to the staff conference room next to the office. That’s where you’ll disrobe on the first day from now on. That ends the Program announcements. Now to our other business...”

The period continued with some additional business matters and then the students were left with the remaining free time to do some quiet work. The bell rang and Tom and Lynette ventured into the hall. There was a knot of kids at one end of the hall, indicating the presence of one or more Program kids, so Lynette steered Tom down another corridor. They reached their next classroom and entered. Tom put his backpack down on the floor next to Lynette’s.

She was about to ask him what he was doing when he whispered to her, “Lynnie, I forgot to tell you—I brought a chocolate bar for you to take to thank you for all the help you’ve been for me—take it out, it’s in the top zipper pocket of my pack. I’ll get the pack after class.”

Then he sat down in his seat as the teacher arrived and motioned Tom to come over to her. He glanced quizzically at Lynette, got up, and went to her desk.

“Dr Taylor gave me a note; it asks for you to go to his office now,” she said. “According to his note, he wants to talk about his conversation with your mother last week.”

She looked over at Tom’s desk; there was no book bag sitting there, on the desk or floor, so she shrugged to herself and thought, *Guess I don’t need to tell him to put his stuff in his locker...*

Tom looked at her, getting annoyed at the interruption from routine. “What about his conversation with Mom?”

“Tom, I don’t know...”

“What does he want?”

“Go, you’ll find out...”

“Why not just call my mom?” Tom was getting really angry now.

“Okay, Tom, just go. Here’s a hall pass to use.” She handed Tom a card.

Really angry now, he snatched the card from her, and, forgetting his backpack, he stormed out of the room with hardly a backward glance at Lynette, who looked at him with concern.

*Thank god I haven’t seen anyone naked, he thought. I’m so damned angry and keyed up I could burst. I almost mouthed off at my teacher.*

His rage was bubbling just beneath the surface now, but he attributed that to the general anxiety he was feeling all weekend.

Tom entered the main office and nodded to the two women working there. The office supervisor who had registered him the first day greeted him, saying, "Tom Armstrong, right?"

"Yes ma'am."

"Dr Taylor will see you now; just go right through that door," she pointed.

"Okay, thanks."

Tom opened the door and entered. The head teacher rose from his seat; there were two other people standing in the room. Tom looked at them questioningly.

"Tom, these are two of our P.E. teachers, you might have met Mr Evans and Mr Rogers before. How are you feeling this morning? Last week I heard that you were taking some pills to help you stay calm."

"Yes sir," Tom replied. "I'm still very anxious about all that naked stuff and need the pills or else I can't cope with it at all."

"I see..." Taylor mused. "You know I spoke to your mum last week and she asked me if I could find a way to help you with your problem about being exposed to nudity in the Program here at school. I believe we've found a way to help."

"Oh, that's good news," Tom said, but the blackness hovering just out of his view seemed to have begun growing. He shivered at the sensation of increased dread.

"Right. And that's why I called you here now. I think we have a way to help you with getting used to the Naked in School Program."

"Um... used to it...? How can you help?" Tom asked uncertainly, feeling a chill starting to envelop him.

Dr Taylor smiled. "Like this, Tom, I discussed with the school's counselor and with the Program coordinator about how you reacted Monday last when you were in assembly where we began the Naked in School Program. We're convinced that the Program can help you overcome your nudity problem; that's actually what the Program's designed for, isn't it. We believe that your being in the Program can help you because of how you reacted. But because of your past experiences, we're giving you some privacy to begin your participating, making it easier for you to get used to being naked, and that's why we called you here separately from the other Program pupils. So let's begin your week's participation in the Program now. Please remove all your clothes; here's a box and..."

Dr Taylor didn't get any further in his comments. As he was speaking, he had been watching Tom's face, which had begun to go pale when he mentioned 'the Naked in School Program,' and just now, at 'remove all your clothes,' had frozen into a rictus of panic; the boy's face had lost all its color and had become an ugly mask of terror.

"NO!" Tom gasped. "NO!" He half-turned toward the door but his body went rigid.

Taylor motioned to one of the P.E. teachers. "Mr Roberts, help him undress."

A girdle of steel was now tightening itself around Tom's chest, it felt to him like that nature program which showed an anaconda crushing its prey; he was the snake's prey now. He suddenly felt like he did that day at the pool when he was eight years old; the blackness was enveloping him; the water was closing over his head; he was drowning; it was all happening again; he was going to die!

Roberts reached out to hold onto Tom, who, trying to shake off his paralysis, was doing all he could to remain aware of his surroundings and not succumb to the blackness of death which seemed to be enveloping him. Then Mr Evans came up to him and, taking hold of his school blazer sleeve, began pulling it off his shoulder. Suddenly Tom was galvanized into awareness and he stiffened.

*"NO! I have to stop them! They're death!"* shouted his mind.

Tom twisted and pushed his body out against Evans with all his strength, and the unexpected violent shove hurled the man away from him. Evans, thrown off balance by the shove, staggered backward toward Taylor's desk; the back of his legs slammed against the desk and, falling backward onto its top, he slid over to its other side and fell onto the floor, carrying with him the desk's contents.

Tom was fighting for his life now. He felt like he was drowning. Only his clothes could keep him alive! They were taking his clothes away and he was going to die! Roberts was still holding onto him; the man was stocky and well-built, but Tom, strong and well-built himself, was in an adrenalin-fueled panic now. With all the strength of his legs, grown powerful by Tom's cycling, weight-lifting, and running, he drove himself backward against the man and the two of them crashed into a bookcase standing against the wall, Roberts taking the brunt of the force of the collision. He yelled in pain at the sudden impact on his back and let go of Tom, staggering away and trying to recover his balance.

Then Tom turned, grabbed the back of the bookcase and yanked on it hard, pulling it over. It toppled over, falling on top of Roberts, who shouted in shock as its contents spilled onto him. Meanwhile, Evans had risen from the floor and was coming around the desk while Taylor stood with his phone in his hand, his mouth gaping in disbelief at the melee in front of him.

"Grab him, Evans, but don't hurt him!" he shouted.

Tom felt like his world was ending—Evans was moving to block his escape route from the office. Tom had to get out! That chair—a chair had slid over toward him when he pulled down the bookcase. He grabbed the chair and flung it at the threat rushing toward him. Occupied with his attempt to protect himself from the chair thrown at him, Evans couldn't stop Tom from reaching the door to the outer office, hauling it open, and rushing out. Several seconds later, the three adults in the room emerged from Taylor's office to see Tom rounding the counter in the outer office, heading for the main office door, only to stop as the school's security guard came rushing in. The head teacher had called him while Tom was fighting for his life in Taylor's

office.

Tom backed up warily as the guard entered and began to move toward him. Tom looked around wildly. Three, no four threatening shapes loomed around him. Like zombies! Faceless figures of death wanting to suck him down into the black depths of the water!

*I don't wanna die!* his mind wailed.

The woman who had greeted Tom when he first entered the office had been seated at her desk when Tom came flying out of Taylor's office, but she rose in alarm from her chair as Tom ran around her desk behind her. She screamed and fled as Tom reached down, seized hold of her desk, heaved it up, and overturned it into the path of the oncoming guard, who jumped away, tripped over a chair, and fell. The computer, keyboard, and screen—all of the contents of the desktop—went flying, as the other woman in the office shouted in fright and ran to the room's far corner.

Tom looked around in his panicked haze. A row of file cabinets stood in the middle of the room, topped with various shelves, trays, and other objects. The two teachers had started coming in his direction again. Ducking behind one file cabinet, Tom pushed it over and it fell into the teachers' path, causing them to jump aside as the objects on top scattered and the drawers flew open and disgorged their contents all over the floor and against their legs. Then, picking up whatever objects came to hand, Tom began slinging them at the teachers, who had to duck and dodge to keep from being hit. One teacher edged closed to Tom, only to be stopped when Tom toppled another file cabinet into his path. The cabinet fell onto some shelf dividers that had landed on the floor and split open, its drawers flying open and spewing their contents in all directions.

Tom had to escape! His path to the main door was still blocked but... yes, the window! He dashed over toward the window. The guard had recovered and was starting toward Tom again. Tom grabbed a computer monitor from a nearby desk, tearing its cables loose, and hurled it at the guard, hitting him in the chest. Then he heaved up the desk's chair and threw it with all his strength at the nearby window.

With a tremendous crash, the heavy chair flew through the window, leaving a gaping hole in its wake, and then falling outside to the ground five feet below. Seeing one of the teachers trying to work his way toward him through all the debris on the office floor, Tom grabbed a few additional items and slung them in the man's direction and then turned, hoisted himself onto the table standing under the window, kicked away some shards of broken glass remaining in the window frame, and slid through the opening, dropping the few feet to the ground.

*Escape!* He was away from the danger. But no, the snake wrapped around his chest was still squeezing him, crushing him, so he knew he was still in danger. *Go home!* The voice whispered in his head. *It's safe at home. Mom's there.* Realizing that the key to his bike was in the backpack he had left with his sister, Tom began running. *Home. Safety!* his mind urged.

Running home and taking deep breaths as he ran, managed to slowly relax the crushing pressure in his chest, so by the time he had run two miles, he began to think clearly again. He realized

what he had done, almost totally trashing the school office.

*I'm gonna be in such deep, deep shit, he thought. I hope Mom's home. Don't even have my keys if she's not. Crap. My phone's in my pack too.*

Fortunately she was home and was just getting off the phone when he came pounding at the door.

## Chapter 5

“Oh my god, Tom,” Angela exclaimed as she opened the door.

“Mom... they... tried...” he began, panting.

She saw the distress and terror in his face.

“I know... the school just called. I heard what happened,” she told him. “Come in... tell me... are you hurt?”

“No, don't... think so... but I... was gonna... die, Mom! They were gonna kill me...” he began crying.

“Tom, you're okay now, no one's going to hurt you. Listen, I called Dad when I heard what happened. We don't have much time, kid. Dad thinks the school'll call the police and they just might want to arrest you, so we need to get you safe till we can get a handle on things. Let's get in the car. I'll tell you while we go.”

Angela called Duncan as they went to the car. Duncan told her that he'd arrange to get a room in a hotel near his office and that she should take him there. A short time later they met Duncan outside the hotel and he took Tom to the room while Angela returned home. Duncan got the whole story from Tom while they walked to the room.

“So that's all I can remember, Dad,” Tom said. “It all happened so fast. I felt like I was gonna die, I really did, and I just wanted to get away from them and they were trying to strip me.”

“So they tried using force to undress you ?”

Tom nodded. “Yeah, one was holding me tight and with the panic, I couldn't move and just went blank, kinda like a dream, you know, where bad things are happening and you can't stop them, but then when one guy tried to pull off my school blazer, something snapped in my head and all I could think of was trying to get away. I don't remember much, all I could think of was that it was like the zombies coming for me, you know, like we saw in that horror movie a few weeks ago?”

“So it was that bad, huh?” Duncan looked at Tom sympathetically.

“Ohmygod,” Tom breathed. “Like a bad dream, where you're running but can't get away, you know? Except it was real. God, why does stuff like this happen?” he moaned.

“Yeah, son, why? That's the question. First, I found out from the doc who wrote the prescription that a side effect of one of your drugs can be hallucinations, paranoia, and violent aggression. The dose might have been too high, also. And even though your shrink from Germany had told us that your problem might get better, it looks like it hasn't, or maybe just hasn't yet. So we gotta find a way to keep you away from that nudity crap in the schools until we know how to help you make things better. Meanwhile, we need to get you out of this little situation. Hey, this is a pretty nice room. Check out that big TV. You stay put here; I'll send Lynette to you here as soon as I can—she'll keep you company. Will you be okay till then?”

"Yeah, Dad, thanks. I love you so much and thanks for taking care of me, even when I do bad stuff."

"Hey sport, this wasn't your fault. Your records Mom gave the school show that you have that phobia and it really affects you badly. Seems those meds made things much worse. I can't believe that your school officials didn't pay any attention to your medical records. Anyway, I love you too and you stay put, okay? Don't use the phone either; we'll call you if we need to. You might need to spend the night so we'll have Lynette bring over what you need."

Duncan left and took a cab home. When he arrived, he noticed a police car in front of the house. He went into the house.

"What's going on? Is everything okay?" he asked the officer who came to the door when he entered.

"We're here about your son, Thomas Armstrong," the officer replied. "You are Mr Armstrong, the father?"

"Is Tom okay? Angela?"

"I'm here..." she answered.

"Ohmygod, what's wrong?" he replied.

Angela came over. "I tried calling you. There was a problem at school. They say Tom did some damage there, The school called about Tom but they didn't say where he was," she said, winking at him.

"Oh really?" Duncan replied as a second officer came to the front door and entered the house. "Must have my phone turned off. What kind of damage?"

"According to the head teacher, he threw stuff all around the office, messed it up a lot," she said.

The second officer spoke. "Where is your son now?"

"He's supposed to be in school, right, Angela?" Duncan answered.

"He's probably not anywhere near the school," the officer replied. "He was last seen jumping out of a ground-floor window. We need to ask him some questions. The school might be laying charges against him."

Duncan looked at him hard. "What kind of charges? Civil or criminal?"

The officer shook his head. "That depends on the investigation and what we learn from your son."

Duncan nodded. "I see. Well, until he shows up, then, you'll need to wait, I suppose. I'll also need to contact my solicitor. Officer, will you be waiting here?"

"When does he normally return home?" the officer asked.

Duncan smiled grimly. "I don't think that the circumstances are 'normal,' do you? Let's see... Angela? When is his usual time?"

Angela looked at her watch. "Maybe two, two and a half hours from now."

The second officer nodded. "Let us check with dispatch. I'll let you know."

They went out to their car.

Angela turned to Duncan. "I texted Lynette and called the school to release her in... um... in fifty minutes from now. I have some clothes packed. I'll drop off the bag with her and send her to Tom."

"Good. Hope the cops don't follow you..." He broke off when there was a knock at the door.

The second officer had returned. "Dispatch wants us to leave but you have to call this number when your son returns." He handed Duncan a card. "Be sure you do, there are legal consequences if he doesn't contact us, you know."

"Okay, officer," Duncan acknowledged.

As soon as the officer left, Duncan got on the phone to his solicitor. He was still talking when Angela left to meet Lynette, who had brought Tom's backpack with her. Soon Angela returned home, after getting a Uber car for Lynette to go downtown. She told Lynette to be dropped off a few blocks away from the hotel in case someone was looking for Tom; she had retrieved Tom's wallet and phone from his school backpack and put it in the overnight bag Lynette was to bring to him.

Duncan greeted her when she entered the house. "Honey, I spoke to Campbell—our lawyer Campbell Morrison—several times. He just called back; he got himself free for the afternoon and said we should meet him at the school in 45 minutes. He spoke to the head teacher and told him we're coming and that he'd better have some legal advice on hand when we get there. Apparently Campbell isn't a great fan of this naked Program either."

"Okay, good," Angela nodded. "Lynette told me that the school office looks totally trashed, like a tornado went through it. There were a few people trying to clean it up and they were keeping gawkers away. They hung sheets over the windows to the hallway to block people from seeing in, but she saw it because she was called to the office. They wanted to know where Tom was."

"Oh. Damage was that bad, huh. Well, I knew that Tom's pretty strong... Andrew told me Tom bench-presses 105 kilograms now and squats 150. Way, way above average," Duncan said proudly. "Shit, those damned drugs. Say, I also spoke to the Crisis Center and they put the shrink who prescribed them on the line. I told him what happened and how Tom reacted to the drugs for the week—and what he told me in the hotel. The shrink asked how Tom was before he got exposed to the nudity shit... um, he didn't use that exact expression..."

Angela chuckled ruefully.

"Anyway, I told him that Tom was just about perfectly balanced, no issues of any consequence.

So he told me to stop the drugs now. He said that Tom hasn't been on them long enough to need to stop them slowly and according to the shrink, he thinks that it looks like they were doing more harm than good; Tom got the paranoia side-effect, what the shrink figured happened. He said Tom should just avoid seeing nudity. I laughed and reminded him of the Program. So he said he'd send a letter to the school telling them that they have to isolate Tom from the Program kids."

Angela shook her head. "I spoke to the head teacher and asked the same thing. He said he couldn't do that."

Duncan smiled grimly. "Okay, but Campbell has a weapon against the school now, he told me. Well, let's get Tom's records out again in case they lost the ones you brought, right? And then it'll be time to meet Campbell."

A half-hour later they met Morrison in front of the school.

"Glad you could handle this one, Campbell," Duncan said while they shook hands. "Different from real estate, no?"

Morrison nodded. "Indeed. But I'm on solid ground here. I worked as a Crown prosecutor earlier in my career. Anything changed from our last conversation?"

"One thing," Duncan replied. "The Crisis Center shrink told me that Tom wasn't responsible; the drugs' side effects gave him paranoia, made him hallucinate and become very aggressive. Tom told me that he thought the teachers were some kind of zombies coming to kill him."

"Oh my..."

"Also the shrink said that he'd send a letter to the school saying that Tom will have no problems being in school if he's kept apart from the nudity and sexual shenanigans."

Angela broke in. "And Lynette is terribly freaked out by everything she's seen. She's scared to death about what'll happen when she gets picked. She's putting up a brave front to support her brother, but she broke down when she was talking with me last night."

Morrison smiled, but there was no humor in his expression. "Two things more to add to our list of demands, then. Let me ring my office briefly."

He stepped aside with his phone, selected a contact, and spoke quickly with the person who answered. Then he looked up.

"That's done. Let's go in."

The three were met at the school's entrance and were shown to the conference room. There was one person already there; she rose and introduced herself.

"I'm Miss Richardson, the counselor. The head teacher will be right in; he's... um... dealing with that... ah... cleanup."

"Yes, of course," Duncan replied and introduced the others.

That's when Taylor entered with two others. He indicated that everyone sit and began introductions.

"I'm Dr Taylor, head teacher. You've met Miss Richardson. This is Mrs Waverly, she'll be recording the meeting. And Mr Jose Garcia, the solicitor for the school. No one was available from the LEA on such short notice..."

The door opened and a woman entered.

"Ah, and this is Mrs Roxanne Gordon, the chair of the school's governors."

Duncan introduced his wife and solicitor, and then opened.

"I asked for this meeting because I want to know what your plans are in connection with my son Tom."

Taylor made a throat-clearing sound, the kind of sound some people use to attempt to assert authority.

"Your son Thomas Armstrong wreaked serious damage on school property, injured two people, and greatly frightened my office staff. We intend to lay assault charges and assess property damages to your family; the preliminary estimate is greater than 10,000 pounds in property damages and lost productivity. We will begin steps for Mr Armstrong's expulsion from school, as well."

"Thank you. I'm going to let my solicitor continue the discussion. Mr Morrison, if you will?"

Morrison nodded. "Dr Taylor, I understand that, except for the first week where you had Program volunteer pupils, that selection for participants was to be random, as the national policy states. Yet it seems quite unique that Mr Thomas Armstrong was singled out by a different kind of notification of his selection; that implies that his choosing was not random, doesn't it?"

Taylor shook his head. "The school reserves the right to select participants other than random choice."

"So you acknowledge that he was deliberately picked, then. Apart from not disclosing that fact in your Program policies, why was a young man who was here in the school a grand total of a little more than three days deliberately chosen, over leaving the selection to random choice?"

Taylor glanced at Richardson. "We had a meeting—that is, Miss Richardson, Mr Grey from the LEA, and Mrs Dodson, our Program coordinator. The teachers had noticed, erm... unusual behavior on Tom Armstrong's part. Mrs Armstrong, in a phone conversation, had asked me to help her son with dealing with his problem. In that meeting we decided the best help would be if he participated in the Program."

Duncan and Angela snorted with derision.

"I see... and of course you have a record of that meeting?"

Taylor looked at Richardson who shook her head. "We didn't record it or take minutes. I don't

recall seeing anyone taking notes, either.”

“Really? You break your own protocol on pupil selection without documenting your decision and rationale?”

Garcia spoke. “This isn’t a legal proceeding, counselor. Your questions sound like a cross-examination.”

“I won’t deny that they are *examination* questions, Mr Garcia. My clients were just threatened with some major, heavy-duty sanctions. Let’s just say that we’re fact-finding now. Less expensive than doing it by deposition or in a courtroom proceeding. Okay, I won’t pursue the lack of minutes for an unusual selection process, Dr Taylor. But what was the basis of your decision to provide this so-called help to Tom?”

“Miss Richardson? I recall you suggested the ‘controlled environment’ for the lad’s disrobing,” Taylor said.

She blushed. “We were discussing how young Mr Armstrong had certain problems when he saw the naked participants during the first Program week—other issues too, like participating in class and how he wouldn’t use the locker room for P.E. Someone thought that the psych treatment called ‘exposure therapy’ would help Tom, so we discussed how to include him in the Program.”

Morrison nodded. “Thank you. And enlighten me, what credentials do any of the participants in that meeting possess to practice psychiatry or psychology? You were devising a kind of psychological treatment plan for Tom, weren’t you?”

He got blank stares.

“Your silence answers the question. You have no such credentials.”

Garcia spoke up. “I don’t see why the school officials need to be shrinks to assign a pupil to the Program. They have the right to do that under the law that authorized the Program.”

“Obviously that’s true, sir,” Morrison replied. “But only if the boy had been selected randomly. He was deliberately chosen for what was clearly stated to be a psychological purpose: to subject him to the psychiatric treatment called ‘exposure therapy,’ which is a medical treatment. Now I need to ask about your familiarity with Mr Armstrong’s medical and psychological school records, which you received when my clients registered him in school here two weeks ago on the Friday. The Armstrongs have shown me a date-stamped receipt for them from your office.”

“I don’t recall seeing anything...” Taylor began thoughtfully.

“So when you became aware of the difficulties Tom was having, and after speaking to his mother, you never checked his file for any prior records which would shed light on his condition.”

“One moment. You made that a statement, not a question,” Garcia objected. “You’re making an unwarranted assumption.”

Morrison shook his head. "I'm not; Dr Taylor's facial expression told me all that I needed to know. He never checked Mr Armstrong's file. Well then, sir, that then justifies our first counter-charge. For not checking my client's psychological records and practicing psychology without proper licensure, Mr Garcia, your clients are guilty of negligence and your school is legally liable."

"Not at all," Garcia retorted. "School officials have wide latitude for the kinds of things pupils are required to do while in the school program."

"That may be true in many cases," Morrison said mildly. "But not in the case of an attempt at using a poorly designed psychological treatment method when records exist which warn against using exactly such a treatment. In Mr Armstrong's case, two *professionals*—a psychiatrist and a psychologist—warned *against* using that treatment modality. And your *amateurs* here, despite the pupil's written psychological records, chose to use that very modality. This is an open-and-shut case of negligence, isn't it. I can't call it malpractice, I don't think, because they aren't licensed to *practice* the professions which use that treatment. But to move on now. You were told by Mrs Armstrong that her son was put on powerful psychoactive medications. These are known to blunt a person's normal responses, and in Tom's case, virtually deadened them, and one known side effect of the medications triggered unwanted psychotic behavior. I stress that these are *known* side effects. I was told that you were aware that he was taking those meds, weren't you?"

"Yes," Taylor responded dully.

"Did you ask the nurse anything about how those meds could affect Tom while in school?"

"No."

"Because you didn't consult his record, but selected him as a participant of your Program, what was your plan if he refused to disrobe when you broke the news of his selection to him?"

"We assumed that he'd refuse, so we had two teachers stand by to help him if he balked at the request." Taylor acknowledged.

"And that's what they did, didn't they? But they did more than 'help' him. You told the teachers to strip Tom and they tried to carry out your directions; am I correct?"

Taylor nodded but Garcia looked alarmed and interrupted. "Stop... Dr Taylor, don't answer. I don't like this line of questioning."

"I have Dr Taylor's nonverbal assent that that's what, in fact, occurred, Mr Garcia. Again, this is not a court of law. According to Tom, the teachers grabbed him and tried to restrain him so that they could remove his clothes. Tom said that Dr Taylor told the teachers to undress him, and also to hold him. Under the laws of the United Kingdom, doing those things constitutes assault and battery on a minor child. Nowhere in the act of Parliament which authorized the Naked in School Program does it overturn the laws which cover committing violence on a person. Dr Taylor, for instructing the teachers to batter Mr Armstrong, you committed an assault; the teachers

committed assault and battery. What you did was to commit a sexual assault on a minor. And since you were acting in your official school capacity as their supervisor, then as well, the school is legally liable.”

“That’s not at all true, sir,” Garcia objected. “Under the Program, pupils can be forced to strip.”

Morrison sighed. “That’s a widespread assumption but completely unfounded. Nowhere in the Program law does it repeal or modify the laws which penalize assault or other crimes against the person; they are still felonies. We could make this a test case if you want. The penalty for a deliberate assault and battery by an adult on a minor is 15 to 20 years. Since the intent was to strip him naked, this offence might very well be considered to be a sexual battery. Shall I lay that complaint with authorities?”

“No! Wait. Give me a minute with my clients,” Garcia requested, now alarmed and standing at his place.

“We’ll stop outside in the hallway. Get us when you’re ready,” Morrison said, and he and the Armstrongs rose and left the room.

“Wow, good job,” Duncan remarked when they closed the door. “You have them on the run.”

Morrison grinned. “Good to get back at the Program, somehow. Last year my daughter was caught up in that shit, pardon my French, and refused to strip off when she was picked. They made verbal warnings and threats but she listened to the headmaster, refused again, then walked out and came home. They didn’t try to force her, thank god; I don’t know what she would have done. She had taken one of those women’s self-defense classes which teach the girls how to do permanent damage to an assailant and she very well might have caused a serious problem for herself and a staff member if they tried using force.”

Angela looked at him. “What did you do?”

“Well, we moved her to a school without the Program.”

She pressed him, “Wait, are there such schools in Lond...?” Suddenly a man came rushing down the hall and stopped in front of them. Angela looked at the man and whispered to Morrison, “...okay, I’ll ask later.”

“Is this the office? Delivery for Mr Morrison,” the man said.

“Ah, good. That’s me,” Morrison nodded.

“Yes, I’ll need an ID?”

Morrison pulled out a card and showed it. The man nodded, then handed over an envelope, got a signature, and left.

“Messenger sent by my office; it’s the updated agreement for the school,” he told the Armstrongs. “Save us time now,” he said, opening the folder and taking out some sheets. “Let me summarize what’s there—it contains our demands for what the school must do for us. Sign

the agreement contracts at your names; initial each page too.”

He summarized the demands which the papers contained and they signed the sheets.

Duncan smiled. “Good. Looks perfect. Think they’ll agree?” He handed the sheets back and Morrison put them away as he answered.

“I think they’ll find that they’ll have to...”

Just then the conference room door opened.

Garcia spoke as they got seated. “My clients want to avoid any unpleasantness and legal disruptions, so without us making any admissions about your claims, what is it that you want to result from this discussion?”

“Let me first give you a bit of a preamble,” Morrison remarked. “In responding to what he perceived as a grave threat against himself, young Mr Tom Armstrong simply acted in his own self-defense; in his panic he was convinced that he was fighting for his life. As well, he was suffering a known side effect of the medications he was taking—after your seeing how they affected him, you should know that he’s been taken off those drugs now since it appears that they affect him so badly. Next, the damage to the office was a result of your own negligence in not reviewing Tom’s file, thereby ignoring the advice of two medical professionals against attempting to treat Tom’s phobia. It’s clear that when Tom is not terrorized by threats of stripping him forcibly, he’s totally harmless to himself and others.

“Mr Garcia, my clients make four non-negotiable demands based on your clients’ negligent and felonious behavior. One, we demand that the school and its officials drop any and all charges which may have been, or are planned to be, laid against him. Second, the school will bear all costs of the damage caused by its officials’ negligent behavior. Third, you will find a way to educate Tom so that he will not come into contact with pupils in your naked Program. Fourth and finally, this concerns Tom’s sister Lynette Armstrong, you will remove her name from the list of eligible pupils for the Program and will not in any way select her for participation either, as you also obviously will not choose Tom again. Failing to meet these four demands will result in the Armstrongs initiating a suit at law against the school and its officials for negligence; we shall seek compensatory and punitive damages as well, and we will lay charges for sexual assault and battery against the head teacher and the other teachers involved.”

Taylor looked at Garcia. “Can we do this...?”

Garcia shrugged. “Up to you. We discussed the options.”

Mrs Gordon spoke for the first time. “Mr Morrison, that damage was really extensive. Surely you don’t expect the school will pay for it all? Can we work out a compromise?”

“Ma’am, we will not compromise. That would imply that Tom has some share of the responsibility for what occurred. You brought on the damage with your own negligence. I assure you we have a virtually ironclad legal case and when you lose in court, your expenses and the judgment and its non-financial consequences will far exceed the cleanup costs.”

She shrugged. "I don't know... it's a difficult choice..."

"Take the known expense, ma'am. Gambling on winning a lawsuit is a bad idea, particularly given the facts of this incident," Morrison counseled.

Taylor spoke, "If we agree that the school will bear the repair costs, it appears that the school must, as well, drop the destruction of property charges. They're linked. Will the police actually let us do that?"

"They will, since if there's no one to stand up at trial and testify about what occurred, the Crown would have no case to present," Morrison assured him.

Taylor looked at Garcia. "How do we proceed?"

Garcia spread his hands. "Your choice, but if you don't accept, then..."

"Yes, yes, I know. Right, then. Okay, Mr Morrison," Taylor responded. "We'll get to your third item last. About the sister; we can't do that, exempting a pupil through what is essentially blackmail."

"Exactly. That's what it is, and you'll do it; you don't have a choice, do you?" Morrison grinned mirthlessly. "Just accidentally delete the name from the eligibles list. Simple. No one needs to know. So that's agreed. And the final item?"

Taylor shook his head. "I don't like... not fair to the pupils... well, fine. You have us in a... checkmate. But there's no way we can shield Mr Armstrong from seeing nudity in the school. I told Mrs Armstrong when we spoke by phone last week, that the group changes every week so there will always be naked pupils in various classes."

"Sir, show some creativity," Morrison chided. "Tom appears to be a smart young man; he has excellent grades. I'm certain that if you stop thinking of reasons why it can't work, you'll figure something out. For example, consider independent learning classes. He could work in the library, I assume. The teachers could prepare the work he should do—after all, it's in their lesson plans, isn't it. Then have the teachers do some one-on-one time with him each day so he can get his questions answered. You're the educational experts; I'm sure there are various models for how to conduct independent learning. Do we have your agreement for this as well, then?"

Taylor nodded reluctantly. "Yes..."

"Excellent. In anticipation of your acceptance of my clients' terms, I've prepared a settlement agreement for your signatures."

He slid the document across to Garcia, who read it, and looked up. "It reads exactly what you stated in your demands. And you added a mutual non-disclosure clause, I see."

Morrison nodded. "Yes. We commit ourselves not to let anyone know about this agreement. And I believe you will find it in your best interests not to divulge its contents either, don't you."

Garcia looked at Taylor. "They've already signed these papers. They need your signature and Mrs

Gordon's representing the school governors. And mine as your counsel."

Reluctantly and with sour expressions, the three officials signed the two copies of the agreement. They kept one and passed the second copy back to Morrison.

Morrison looked at Duncan and, with a hand gesture, invited him to speak.

Duncan looked thoughtful. "The topic we need to discuss now is twofold. First, how my son will be viewed by others. How many people know that it was he who caused the office damage?"

Taylor thought for a few seconds. "Not many. No pupils. The two teachers, the guard, and my office staff. And those here."

"Will they be discreet and not gossip?" Duncan asked.

"I'm certain they will be; I'll contact them when we're done. You said two points."

"Still on the first. We don't want the kids—or teachers—to view him as a troublemaker or worse, a psychotic—or some kind of hero for messing up your office. You can see how that would lead to other problems, right?"

"Certainly. I agree," Taylor acknowledged.

"Now, next point. Given that you will need time to work out an independent learning program—hell, I hate that word 'program' now—what I suggest is that tomorrow, Tom goes to home room just like normal. No naked kids in there this week, I heard. Then he goes to the library. He has a ton of makeup work from last week and only did about half this weekend before he crashed. Lynette helped him a fair amount. He can get his work done and you folks can use the class lesson plans to get the materials he needs. The only thing he'd be missing is the classroom discussions and his participation in them. He does love to debate topics he feels strongly about. If you were really creative, you could set up remote participation using a video camera and speaker, sort of like Skyping the class."

Taylor nodded. "Hmmm... interesting ideas. Yes, that sounds like a good plan to use for tomorrow. Thanks. I appreciate your thought of keeping the semblance of normality, that is, at least as normal as the Program allows school to be these days. Look, I really regret the way this matter worked out as it did, and apologize for the distress it caused you and your son. We've learned an important lesson, Mr Armstrong. Thank you for not rubbing our faces in the mud in revenge."

With that apology, the group rose and said their farewells; the Armstrongs and their counsel left.

"That went amazingly well," Angela sighed as they left the building. "Campbell, I can't believe how you got everything, but you *did* go after them like a bulldog." She laughed. "Impressive."

"I had good ammunition. The thing was to use it properly. Give no ground; allow no wiggle room."

Duncan laughed. "Yeah, they couldn't wiggle, but you sure made them squirm."

They all laughed.

Angela suddenly said, "Oh, Campbell, you mentioned schools without the Program, earlier?"

"Sure. Independent schools don't have to run it. They're tuition based, not government funded, so they don't have to follow the government's curriculum which includes the Program. I moved Dorothy to one so for her last year she won't have to worry about being in it."

Angela nodded. "Maybe we should look into that. What school is she in?"

He chuckled. "Won't help Tom. He hasn't the proper physique. It's an all-girls' school."

"Yeah," Angela agreed, chuckling. "That's a problem. Well, if there's one such school, there are more. We'll look into it."

"You know that Tom would never agree to go to an all-boys' school," Duncan remarked to Angela. "Remember how he fussed when he learned that Andrew wouldn't be going to his school."

"True, Tom and Lynette couldn't bear to be separated that way, I know."

## Chapter 6

The Armstrongs decided to celebrate their success, and since it now was the late afternoon, they decided to pick up Tom and Lynette and go to dinner.

On the way to the hotel where Tom and Lynette were waiting, they discussed restaurants.

“Angie? We need to see if Andrew can come, too.” Duncan said.

“He’s at soccer—no, it’s called football practice. I’ll try him.”

The call went to voice mail so Angela left a message for him to call back; telling him where to meet the family for a restaurant dinner. After parking in the hotel’s parking ramp, they went to the kids’ room and knocked.

“Lynette? Tom? It’s Mom and Dad,” Angela called.

Tom threw the door open and hugged her. “Oh, I’m so glad to see you guys,” he breathed, then hugged his father. “Am I going to jail?”

Lynette had come over and taken Tom’s hand, looking at her father with concern.

“No, kids, everything is good. Really good, in fact,” he said grinning at them. “But first, we have our civic duty.”

The kids looked puzzled as Duncan pulled out the card the officer had given him.

“I need to call and let the police know you’re with us now.”

He made the call and identified himself. “I have Thomas Armstrong with me now.”

“...”

“They did? Okay, thanks for the news.” He disconnected and looked at Angela. “The school dropped the complaint. So they don’t need to talk to Tom.”

Angela clapped her hands. “Excellent. Our celebration is in order.”

The youngsters looked at their parents, puzzled.

“Okay, guys, here’s what happened after Mom sent Lynette off in the Uber car...”

After he finished describing the day’s events and summarized what happened at the conference at the school, he told them about the signed agreement.

“This is what the agreement says, and it’s absolutely essential that you don’t breathe a word of it to anyone or even mention what Tom did to the office. The school’s keeping it quiet too, as if nothing ever happened,” Duncan went on.

“Yeah, Dad, I won’t say anything.”—“I promise to keep it a secret.” they said, speaking together.

“The school officials agreed to several things. Tom, you won’t be held responsible for trashing the office and they won’t ask our family to pay any of the costs to clean it up.”

A big smile of relief flashed over Tom's face.

"Now here's the fun part. We asked that you, Tom, be isolated from that nudity circus, as in doing a sort of in-school independent study, so you won't be faced with those distractions. They're gonna come up with a specific plan, but for tomorrow, Tom, you need to go to home room and then for the first period to the end of the day, you'll go to the library. Someone will make sure you're kept up to date with the work and your teachers will drop by to answer any questions. Meanwhile, the school will figure out how to keep that study program going. Sound good?"

Tom had a broad smile. "Awesome, Dad! But... um... most classes... in my classes, part of the grade is for participation..."

Duncan turned to Angela. "See, honey, Tom's back with us! He immediately saw the major problem." He turned back to Tom. "Yes, we actually discussed that issue and Dr Taylor is working on it. Grade-wise, anyway, it won't count against you."

"Cool, Dad. The classes go so slow, anyway. Maybe working by myself, I can go faster and learn more."

"That's the spirit, sport! Show 'em what an Armstrong can do!" Duncan grinned.

Then he turned to Lynette. "The final part of the school's agreement concerns you, honey."

"Me?" she squeaked.

"Yeah, Mom can tell you about that one."

Angela smiled. "Lynette, you won't have to worry about ever being chosen for the Program. As part of our deal with the school, they've agreed to take your name off the list of pupils to be selected."

"*SQUEAL!* Ohmygod, Mom!" she rejoiced, hugging her mother. "How... what... how did that happen?"

She released her hug and looked at Duncan.

"Our lawyer used a bit of blackmail on them is how, sweetie," Angela said. "You don't need to know the details, and *you-can't-tell-a-soul-about-this* or all bets are off! You hear? They were really reluctant to exempt you but Mr Morrison gave them no choice."

"Oh, I'd never take the chance that the head teacher would change his mind, Mom," Lynette exclaimed as she threw her arms around and hugged her mom again and then her dad.

Duncan grinned. "So do you think that celebrating this news is in order, kids?"

"YES!" they both shouted.

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With a fair amount of trepidation, on Tuesday morning, Tom rode to school with his sister.

Like Monday, both were deep in thought and didn't say much. But when they arrived, the activity around the school



appeared normal, *Program kids in their morning stripping naked performance in front of the school* if one considers

that it's normal having a bunch of rowdy kids watching a small number of embarrassed kids stripping naked in front of the school building.

But Tom paid no attention to that crowd; he concentrated on keeping his eyes averted while the two rode to the bike rack at the building's rear near the staff parking.

Lynette was also deep in thought. "It's starting to get chilly; wonder where the kids will strip when it's really cold outdoors?" she muttered, but Tom heard her anyway.

Tom snorted. "Right. Glad that won't be our problem."

"So true. Oh, I remember, they'll use the commons. That's not such a great idea either—there's not enough room for the crowd I've seen around the Program kids in the morning strip show. I guess they can't use the gym either because of early team practices. Well, you'll need to remember to stay away from the commons. Okay, let's go in. No Program kids in home room this week."

"Yeah," Tom agreed. "Wonder if the Head will call for me today."

On the way to their classroom, Audrey, one of their classmates, hailed Lynette.

"Hey Lynette; oh, hi, Tom—haven't seen you in classes all that much, Tom—say, weren't you sent to the office yesterday morning right after the new flock of Program kids was hatched? We all heard that somehow the entire office got trashed right after that. There're sheets covering the windows. Broken window outside too. No one can figure out what happened. I figure you must have been there just before it happened. Do you know about that?"

Tom shrugged. "I heard about that too. Can't say anything about it, myself."

"Oh. Okay..." Audrey chatted with Lynette for a minute and then ran off to put some books in her locker.

Lynette looked at Tom and smirked. "Way to go. Just like a lawyer—a literally true but totally misleading answer for Audrey."

"Well, I try to keep you entertained," Tom grinned, and they joined a bunch of kids entering their home room classroom.

When home room period was over, Tom hurried to the library so he'd get out of the halls quickly; he had noticed that the Program kids delayed leaving their classrooms for as long as possible to minimize the time they had to be in the halls and be subject to doing those "reasonable requests." He went into the library and the librarian called to him.

"Are you Tom Armstrong?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Okay, I was told you'd be coming in here today. I expected you earlier."

"Well, I thought I was to go to my home room first this week. I believe that was the arrangement."

She nodded, "That's all right. The custodian brought that screen in here a few minutes ago," she said, pointing at it; "the head teacher said you were to use it to screen off your study area. I wasn't sure where you wanted to sit, so I had him leave it till you got here. I'm thinking about that carrel in the far corner; is that okay for your study station?"

Tom looked at where she indicated. "That looks fine. Wherever you want me to be is good."

"Certainly. The Head didn't tell me what this was all about, just that you were trying some independent learning. As well, I have some work for you that your teachers sent."

Tom took the materials and helped the librarian position the screen so that his station was somewhat visually isolated from the rest of the room. He saw that he'd have plenty of work to keep him occupied for the remainder of the day. But when the time for lunch came, Tom realized that his plan had a major shortcoming. He had forgotten all about what he'd do for lunch and now his stomach was growling.

*Shit. There are always naked kids in the caf,* he thought, as he looked at his watch when the bell for his lunch period rang. *Oh well, starving for a day won't kill me.*

He went back to reading an assigned chapter, taking notes as he read. About fifteen minutes later, he heard a familiar voice asking, "Is that Tom Armstrong's hideout?"

He peeked around the screen and there was Lynette, with a big grin, carrying a tray with several sacks on it.

"My smart brother forgot all about lunch," she grinned. "I asked the lunch lady if I could get a care package and explained that you were assigned to a special program in the library. She called

the office and they said it was legit, so I got a bag lunch for me too—and so here we are, me and the lunches!”

“Oh thanks, Linnie, you’re a life-saver! You take such good care of me...” He grabbed her and kissed her on the cheek but she turned her head suddenly and his kiss landed on her lips. He tried to pull back but Lynette held his face while she kissed him back.

“Mmmm...” she sighed and then pushed him away. “Let’s cool it; even with the stupid Program running I’m not sure about the PDA rules, and you don’t want to mess up our great deal, right?” she whispered.

“Sure. Let’s party now, sweetie,” Tom proclaimed, sweeping his arm at the tray with its two lunch bags.

Lynette giggled and began unpacking some styrofoam containers and plastic utensils.

While they were eating, Tom asked Lynette, “Say, have you made any friends from your classmates yet? Obviously I haven’t,” he grinned. “No mates in here, you see. But you know that I’m more of a loner, I guess; I never really had a lot of friends. You’re my friend and you’re all I need.”

“Oh Tommie, how sweet. Well, there are these two girls I like; you met Audrey. There’s Janice too and we usually have lunch together. I might have them come to the house; not sure though. Oh, several guys’ve asked me for a date.”

Tom smiled at her. “And?”

“Shot them down. They weren’t you. You’re my standard for what a boy should be like and I haven’t found anyone to match that standard yet,” she fluttered her eyes at Tom.

“Now you’re embarrassing *me*,” Tom muttered.

After they ate, Lynette mused, “I don’t think I can do this every day so you’ll have to find out what you should do for lunch.”

He agreed with her. “I haven’t heard from the Head about anything yet, but I’ll ask. Maybe tomorrow I’ll bring in lunch from home.”

She nodded, “Good idea. Well, I gotta run. See ya after school.”

Right after lunch, Tom got a message to meet the head teacher after home room on the following day.

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On Wednesday, Tom headed out of home room to his meeting with the head teacher. He walked into the main office; what a difference from his visit here only two days earlier! There were tarps hanging from the ceiling that were shielding parts of the room from view and the broken window was boarded up. There were piles of paper stacked on various surfaces and a heap of random computer parts lay in one corner. The office ladies scowled at Tom when he entered the room

and one simply pointed wordlessly to the Head's office.

Taylor looked up when Tom knocked at his open door and told him to come in and close the door. The mess in this room had been all cleaned up. He was relieved to see that there wasn't anyone else in the room; as he thought back to Monday morning, he felt his heartbeat quicken and took several deep breaths to calm down. Taylor motioned him to a chair.

"So you saw the condition of the office, Tom?" he said mildly, then he noticed Tom's pale face. "Are you feeling all right this morning?"

"Yes, sir. I'm all right. A bad memory is all... I... I guess I need to tell you that I'm truly sorry; I just..."

"It's really okay," Taylor interrupted. "Well, not okay that you did it, but your folks explained what happened to you to cause that... erm... reaction. And for that, I need to apologize myself, for how my staff and I handled your problem. We made some assumptions and we were wrong. Anyway, we need to deal with the current situation as best as we can. For this to work going forward, Mr Armstrong, you will have to be on your best behavior, is that clear?"

"Yes, sir. I promise," Tom said meekly.

"So we need to set up a kind of remote learning for you to keep you out of the classrooms and the... erm... distractions... ah, you find so disturbing. What we've decided to do is based on a plan that we've actually been working on for the past year; we've simply accelerated its schedule somewhat to accommodate your situation. I've asked the technology teacher and the audio-visual systems technician to help set up the classrooms you're supposed to be in by mounting a kind of webcam—a WiFi-enabled video camera in each classroom. We'd already planned a distance-learning program so we'd already purchased a number of the cameras; we have enough of them now to be able to put one in each of your classrooms this term, don't we. They'll be mounted on the video projectors on the ceilings of each room and they'll be connected to the school's network with wireless access.

"We've gotten the work started today and we should have those cameras operating by Monday. To view a class, you'll need to log into the school network, select the proper classroom camera feed, and then you'll be able to see the whole front of the room, mainly the whiteboard and the teacher too if he or she is in the camera's range. As well, you'll be able to hear the classroom sounds and to speak and participate in the class, but we don't have the funds to put video monitors in each room or rig the projectors to allow the class to see you—but we don't think that will be that much of a problem. Another thing; we don't want to let the entire world know that you're, well, averse is a mild word—to nudity, so if anyone should ask why you're doing this modified classroom work, the cover story is that Tom Armstrong will be helping the school to do an extended test of the technology system we're setting up to allow distance learning for homebound students and for recording classes for athletes on teams traveling away from school.

"Now here's how you'll get access to the classes. The library has several wireless-enabled computer tablets with large screens. They have adjustable stands to hold them so they can stand

on a table, making it convenient to watch the classroom video while you take notes. You'll sign out a tablet each day and to hear and speak, you'll need to wear a wireless earphone and mike combo but that device seems easy to use too. Voices will be transmitted both ways; the classroom mike and speaker will be located at the webcam. Now for today, tomorrow, and Friday, you'll continue working in the library as you did yesterday. Sound okay?"

"Yes sir. I think that this setup will work fine. I did have a question about what I should do about lunch."

"Ah yes. And I know how important food is to a teen—especially a boy. The lunch lady yesterday didn't know what to make of your sister's request. Well, I'll work that out with them. Are you okay for today?"

"Brought my own lunch, sir."

"Good. I'll let you know what the cafeteria can do, going forward. Have any other questions?"

"No sir. And thanks again."

"Good. You can go. And remember, you'll be on your best behavior, won't you."

"Yes sir." Tom left.

The technology plan worked as Taylor described, with only a single problem: the sound pickup of student voices in classrooms was marginal; there was a fair amount of echo and to Tom, the kids' voices seemed like they were coming out of a barrel. He could hear them, but he had to concentrate. The teachers' voices came through much more clearly.

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Two weeks after Tom began to attend classes by video in the library, he was leaving the school and was walking to his bike, when two guys called to him.

"Hey, you're that Tom Armstrong bloke, right?" one called.

"Yeah, I am." He recognized the two as members of a couple of the classes he wasn't attending anymore, at least not attending in the flesh.

"Some of us've noticed that you've got shot of all the classes now."

Tom started to reply but was cut off by the second guy.

"You was th' bloke who ran out o' the auditorium on th' first day an' my mate 'n' I saw how you avoided all th' bollock-naked stuff going on in classes an' in th' halls. What's wi' you, y'r thick or somethin'?"

"I'm... um..." Tom tried to think of a reply. "No, just helping with a school project..."

"Slag off, we've sussed ya out," the first sneered. "Somehow you're scared of people who're starkers. You gotta be a clot or a nutter! You..."

Tom looked baffled. "I have no idea what all that slang means. What d'ya guys want, anyway?"

"Looks like y'got somethin' t'hide," the second boy said in a low voice. "We'll keep it hushed if y'make it worth it t' us."

"Damn!" Tom exploded. "You jerks tryin' to extort me? Go to hell!"

He turned and angrily strode away as he called back, "I don't give a fuck what you say about me!"

He saw Lynette dart out of the school and run toward him.

"Mrs Wilson stopped me as I was leaving our last class. She had graded the work you handed in and gave to me to give you—and gave me a heads-up that the two of us'll be assigned to work on a group project she's planned for next week. Who were you yelling at?"

"Oh, couple of jerks," Tom said. "They were trying to shake me down."

"What happened?"

Tom related the encounter to her.

"Crap... well, if they start spreading lies or try to stir up things against you, don't do anything to them—you'll get in real trouble. I know—you tell Mom what happened; she can call the Head and maybe he can alert the teachers to keep a lookout for gossip like that."

"Good idea, sis," Tom smiled at her.

At home later that evening, Tom was going over the papers Lynette had given him. He came to one sheet, it was work he had turned in early in the previous week.

He walked to his sister's room. "Lynette? I don't understand what Worthington's note on my paper means. Think you might know?"

He handed her the paper and sat on her bed next to her. She looked it over.

"Yeah, right," Lynette wrinkled her brow. "That's the week you were totally zoned out."

She went on to explain the work he missed in class and what she thought the teacher's comment meant; now he knew what the teacher wanted him to do. He looked at Lynette's face and grinned.

"Lynn timer, you look so cute when you do that."

"Do what?"

"You screw up your face sometimes when you're thinking. It makes you look so cute."

He reached out and stroked her cheek. She took his hand from her cheek and then kissed it, looking Tom in the eyes. Their eyes locked; then she blushed.

"Um... thanks. I... um..." She slid closer to him, still holding his hand, and kissed Tom's cheek. She looked longingly into his eyes as she moved her head back toward Tom's face; then she

shook herself and stood up. "Ah... was that all you needed, Tommie? I still have work to do, so..."

"Yeah, that was it." He looked at his step-sister searchingly; her face was a rosy pink. "Yeah, thanks for the help, sweetie."

He walked back to his room, bemused. Tom loved his step-sister deeply. Did she love him in return? But if she did, what then? He had no answer and his mind was whirling.

## Chapter 7

December had arrived and everyone in the school was looking forward to the holidays. It was Monday, and like every Monday, the names of those students selected to participate in the Program were read out, so after they reluctantly stood and grudgingly left the classroom to get naked, Tom left for his study area in the library. Some snickers reached his ears as he left the room, so he just turned, made a “yeah, so what” gesture, and left. The two trouble-makers who had threatened to spread rumors about Tom had actually begun to do just that, but an alert teacher overheard them and a quick trip to the head teacher and a lecture stopped any further rumor-mongering on the two boys' parts.

*I don't know why they even bother having me go to home room on Mondays, he thought. For the whole term, there's only been two times that a kid in my home room hasn't been picked. They should let me go right to the library every day.*

He stopped off at the librarian's office and collected the class materials left for him by his teachers and then got settled in his corner carrel. Pulling out the computer tablet, he turned it on, connected to his first class's video stream, mounted the tablet in its stand, and adjusted its position. He put on the wireless headphone and then opened the folder containing his copy of the class's lesson materials. The class change bell sounded then.

Then he noticed that teacher's instructions told him that he should get a certain book from the class's reserved books shelf, so he got up and looked for it there. The book wasn't to be found, so he went to see the librarian. The two of them searched for several minutes when the bell for the period beginning rang.

“I'll have to let your teacher know that the book's not here,” the librarian said, as she walked back to her office.

Just then a student aide came in, wheeling a cart of books to be reshelfed. “Oh, wait, Tom, here's your book.”

She picked it up from the books on the cart and gave it to him.

“Thanks,” Tom told her, and went back to his carrel.

Standing in front of



Overhead camera view of relief session

the table, he put the book down and absentmindedly glanced at the tablet—his heart jumped into his throat. There on the screen, in plain view, a naked girl was sprawled out on a chair and an equally naked boy was crouched between her legs; his face was in her crotch and his hand was rubbing her breast. The audio from the room coming through his headset unmistakably indicated that the boy was doing a wonderful job pleasuring the girl; she was squealing, “Oh, oh... oh yeah... ahhh... oh... like that... ooohh!”

Tom stared at the sight, paralyzed, like a mouse staring at a snake ready to strike. He couldn't tear his eyes away, but his heart was pounding and he was having difficulty breathing. He was locked in position for almost a full minute when the girl on the screen screamed as she orgasmed. Tom's legs suddenly felt like jelly; they couldn't support him any longer and he slumped into his chair. That's when he became aware of a dull pain emanating from his groin—his penis had become like an iron bar. Tom pushed the tablet so it faced away as he tried to control his labored breathing; then he realized he could still hear the girl speaking.

“That was awesome, Martin. Now it's your turn. Shit, you're big; mmmm, let me suck it in...”

Tom tore off the headset and leaned back in his chair, sighing.

*Shit!* he thought. *Fuck, that hurts!* and he tried adjusting himself to relieve the pressure in his crotch. He quickly noticed that his feelings of panic had almost instantly disappeared when he became aware of his sexual excitement. The panic, the chest tightening, the dizziness—all gone.

*Now that's totally weird,* he thought. *What the hell does that mean?*

He tried to think of a way to test it again but looking for another way of seeing a relief session seemed to be too frightening to contemplate; then he realized that the class must have started by now, so he set up the tablet again and soon became involved with the class.

After the class was over, Tom realized that the camera's view in that classroom must have moved down a bit—it must have gotten bumped somehow, because its view had never shown any chairs in the front of the room before. He decided that, in the future, he'd check the audio coming from the classrooms first so he could avoid seeing any more disturbing video.

*What the hell am I thinking of?* he berated himself. *I get a just about perfect porn video shot and I'm thinking of ways to avoid it? I'm crazy, absolutely crazy!* He shook his head and tried to make sense of how his sexual stimulation affected his panic. *I need to talk to someone, damn it, but it's so fuckin' embarrassing... Maybe Lynette... we talk about everything, and she jokes about how she gets turned on by all the stuff she sees... And then she realizes that her talkin' about it makes me uncomfortable and she stops. Maybe she needs to talk it over too. Oh god, I don't know what to do.* he sighed miserably.

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At home after school that day, Tom went to Lynette's room to continue their work on a class project that they had been assigned to do together. They each had done some independent research and now they planned to combine their work into the report writeup.

“Oh, Tommie, I heard something today about a blog that posts stuff about bad Naked in School crap happening in different schools,” Lynette said. “One of the girls found it and she said she read about some really awful things that were happening in some schools.”

“Huh, really? How about in our school? I’m so far out of the rumor loop that if the place burned down tomorrow, I’d first hear about it next week.”

“Very funny. No, can’t say that I know of anything really bad at our school. Just the usual sex-crazed performances. I get so damned turned on sometimes... especially today... But Sally was really distressed about what she read, ‘cause she’s scared out of her mind about what’ll happen when her turn comes.”

“God, it must be awful to have that Program selection crap hangin’ over your head, you know?” Tom sighed. “We’re so lucky that we’re not gonna get involved. I’m certain that I wouldn’t be interested in reading that blog especially if it talks about bad stuff.”

“Yeah, me too. But I feel sorry for people who are forced to do things that make them feel horrid,” Lynette said, shaking her head. “I wanna look at that blog—see what Sally was saying about other schools.”

Tom grimaced. “And those tabloid articles we’ve read about the Program too. Hey—those articles—they also mentioned a blog kinda like that, right?”

Lynette was typing at her laptop. She looked up. “Yeah, that’s right. Okay, the search results are here... yeah... I think this is it. Called *The Realist*. Let me see. This must be it. Oh my, here’s an article about a girl where the head teacher had cut off her long hair ‘cause she could use it to hide her titties... and here’s a link, let me click it... oh god, it talks about the Program being a kind of torture of kids. Hmmm, there are links to newspaper articles that talk about abuse like that too... let’s see... wow, the tabloids write about the blog and how it’s exposing all the bad things about the Program... Tommie? Are you okay?”

Tom’s face had turned a bit gray. “Um, sis, can you please stop with that Program shit? It’s really bothering me today, thinking about all that crap.”

Lynette pushed her laptop away. “Okay, Tommie. Hey, we better get to work on that project now.”

“For sure. Take my mind off all that Program shit.”

“Okay. I think that after we write the intro and basics of the topic we’re discussing, your part should come first,” she suggested.

“Yeah, makes sense; mine’s the positive viewpoint,” Tom replied.

They started to discuss how to word the introduction. Lynette opened her notebook and began reading and making notes. She wrinkled her forehead and Tom chuckled; she looked up at him and he winked at her.

“Cut that out!” she smiled. “Actually, this project we’re doing covers what’s becoming a kinda

hot topic now... um... crap, I'm still thinking about hot topics... a different kind of hot topic... shit, can't get that damn scene outta my mind. There was this really hot relief scene in first period class, just so fuckin' hot. Had me so damn bothered, thinkin' about it all bloody day."

"Oh shit, yeah," Tom sighed. "That's why I wanted you to quit looking at that blog stuff about the Program. It's makin' me think about that first period class and watching that scene really, really bothered me too."

Lynette looked at him. "Wait—what? You just said you watched it? How? How could that happen?"

"Yeah, I watched—I saw it. By accident. Somehow the camera got bumped so its view tilted down enough for me to see the chairs they use for that relief shit. I got a bird's eye view from like above the front row, you know, real close, and I fuckin' couldn't look away either. Gerry—was that her name?"

"Yeah."

"She was sprawled out there, totally exposed, and I saw almost the whole thing."

"Ohmygod, Tommie! What happened, you didn't freak out and panic, I hope!"

"No, it was weird. It felt like the panic started but suddenly I got so fuckin' aroused, the panic never got any steam up to go anywhere. It just... um... fizzled... died down. I felt the chest pressure crap start and my breathing got tight, then... nothing... gone, zilch... just, shit, I got so damn hot seeing what... um, that was Martin, I guess, was doing to her!"

He continued to briefly describe what happened to him as he watched the girl get her orgasm.

"I was just frozen there, watching. The sound was coming through on my earpiece too and I couldn't make myself look away either. My body really reacted, you know, in my crotch," he said, blushing. "So when I got aroused like that, the panic just kinda fizzled out; I could still feel it, you know? Way in the background? But it was like it didn't matter; it wasn't affecting me. All I felt was myself gettin' awful tight down there and it was damn uncomfortable."

"Holy shit, Tom! Wow, that's incredible—say, did you try to see if you could watch another relief session after that to see if the same thing happened?"

"The thought occurred, sweetie. But I was so scared; like maybe that time was a fluke and if I forced myself to watch something like it again, maybe it would be worse? I don't know! I just don't know!" he groaned.

"Oh, Tommie, my dear Tommie..." Lynette murmured as she stroked his cheek. "You know that I love you so much and how badly I want to help you get over your panics. Tell me, how did you feel when you saw Gerry naked like that; she's a really pretty girl."

"Ah, well, I couldn't look away, I told you, but the panic wasn't so bad at seeing Gerry—well, maybe since it was all taking place on that tablet screen, I dunno. It wasn't near me, so there wasn't much threat, I guess. It was just a picture. Maybe that's why I didn't have a bad reaction."

“But when did you notice that you were excited?”

“I think... yeah, I got all weak and my legs gave way—I was standing; I had just walked back to the desk and glanced at the screen. Then suddenly it hit me what I was seeing. Then I watched, like I couldn't look away. So yeah, I guess noticed that I... was hard... um... but I noticed it only when Gerry screamed that she was cumming.”

Lynette sighed and squirmed; this discussion was making her relive the erotic sight in her memory and that memory was turning her on again.

“Oh wow, Tommie, I'll bet your legs gave way 'cause you were turned on by seeing Martin and Gerry and... maybe... yeah, maybe when you get all hot like that, maybe you can't panic? Shit, I think you should have tried to find another relief session to watch!”

“Oh hell, no... thought about doing it... but... shit, I don't know, I was really scared of getting panicked.”

Suddenly a really wild thought occurred to Lynette. *What if I tried helping him...?* raced through her mind. She blushed. And then she resolved to herself to try getting her brother turned on—with her own body.

She said, aloud, “Tom, I just had this dumb, crazy idea. We can try it right now, just us two, where it's totally safe for you.”

Tom stared at her, openmouthed. “Try *it*? What do you mean, 'it'?”

“Just part of what you saw. I can get undressed and... um... try to get you... um... turned on. Yeah, that'll see how much you react, and if it looks like it'll get bad for you, we can stop right away.”

“God, no, Lyn...”

“Sshhhh! Tom, look, this might be the breakthrough you need! You know you're totally safe with me, we love each other and share all our secrets too. This is your chance to see if you can do the one single thing that you've just now found that pushes away your panic, something that you've never had happen before—not panicking when you see nudity. Please do this for me... and you.”

She looked at him with doe eyes; he never could resist Lynette when she looked at him like that.

He reluctantly nodded. “Okay, I guess, but if I start to get bad, please stop, okay? Please?”

Lynette smiled brilliantly and hugged him.

“Good, now Tom, I'm gonna take off my top... oh wait, I have a better idea!”

She ran to her closet, grabbed a scarf, and brought it out.

“I'm gonna blindfold you and then I'll do some things to try to get you all hot and bothered. And just so you know, I'll be undressing too. You'll know that but won't see anything. I think that'll kinda trick your body in a way. Your mind will know but you won't see anything. Now just relax and try not to worry about what's happening, just think about how you're feeling.”

“Um, okay, I guess...?”

She tied the scarf around his head. “Can you see?”

“Jeez. No.”

“Okay, here goes.”

Lynette slipped off her t-shirt. Now wearing just her bra and loose sweatpants, she took Tom's hand and put it on her bra over her left breast.

“How does that feel? That's my bra you're touching.”

“Oh wow... mmmm...”

She slipped the bra up from under his hand, baring her breasts, and pressed his palm against the nipple. Then she rubbed her nipple on his palm. She sighed, it felt wonderful, then an unfamiliar sensation overwhelmed her and she shivered.

“Mmmm, feel my nipple, Tommie? It loves what your hand is doing,” she teased him and then pulled his other hand up to her chest. “Rub them both, Tommie, sweetie. Mmmm... sooo good... now don't be alarmed at this...”

Tom was also wearing sweatpants; she slowly slipped her hand under his elastic waistband and loosened the string tie.

“Oh shit, what are you...?” He tried to pull his hands down but she stopped him and put them back on her chest.

“Ssshhhh,” she whispered as she stroked his cheek. “Keep them there. Just relax and feel my titties. That feels so damn good, Tommie.”

She reached under Tom's waistband, into his underpants, and took hold of his penis. Ever since she had begun seeing all those naked boys walking around school with their cocks swinging, she had longed to try this but felt too inhibited. There was something else that bothered her about the nudity and sex she saw—it was a general feeling of distress and fear which pervaded her senses while she walked in the halls. It was very uncomfortable and kept her feeling very uneasy all day long.

“OH!” he grunted as he pulled his hips back. “STOP, Lynnie!”

His penis had sprung up into a rigid pole.

“Okay, sweetie, I'll let go, but keep up what you're doing to my titties. I love it.”

Her hands free now, she slipped her sweatpants off her hips and pushed down her panties; then wiggling her hips, let them both drop to around her ankles. Then she unclipped her bra's front clasp and shrugged it off her shoulders.

“How are you feeling now, Tommie?” she murmured.

“Um, this is weird, Linnie. Your tits are awesome. I think my body is trying to panic but my cock’s so fuckin’ hard I think my body forgot how to get a panic goin’ on me. All my blood must be down below...”

“Good, now try this,” she said, as she took one of his hands and guided it down to her vulva.

“What are you... shit! Is that your... Oh damn, you’re fuckin’ soaked there, sis. What the hell’s goin’...”

He couldn’t resist it any more. Tom tore off the scarf as Lynette wrapped an arm around his neck and pulled him into a scorching kiss. With her other hand, she reached back into his pants, grabbed his penis, and began stroking it gently.

“Mmmffff... Linnmmmm... aaahhh...” Tom gasped as Lynette’s tongue sought the inside of his mouth.

He gave up the feeble resistance he was attempting to make against Lynette’s oral assault and embraced her, crushing her in a hug, as they passionately kissed. Lynette used her hands to shove Tom’s pants and underwear down. The garments puddled on the floor around his ankles while she pressed her hips against his groin, rubbing his throbbing erection between their bodies. Then she put her hands on Tom’s butt cheeks and stroked them, marveling at their shape and firmness.

Tom couldn’t think at all. The sensations of his penis being squeezed against his step-sister’s belly while his buttocks were being fondled were overloading his brain, driving away any thought that he was standing there virtually naked. Suddenly all of his love for his wonderful step-sister came crashing through into his consciousness. Lynette was his soulmate, he realized. He felt like his head was going to explode with the awesome sensations that were coursing through him and instead of the crushing pain in his chest of a panic attack, all he felt was a different kind of chest crushing as it swelled with an all-consuming love for her, and he felt a rush of intense emotion as it built and caught in his throat.

As their passionate kissing continued, Lynette was feeling like she never wanted to stop. She had always been powerfully attracted to her step-brother and had suspected that it was a romantic attraction; now she knew for certain that what she felt was truly romantic love. This guy was perfect in every way and her heart melted every time she thought about him.

Lynette put her hands on Tom’s face and holding his cheeks, gently moved his head back. Then he noticed her body.

“Ohmygod!” he exclaimed, “you’re naked! Shit, sis, you’re gorgeous!”

“Look down at yourself, darling,” Lynette said and Tom did.

“Fuck, when did that happen?” he said, nonplused. “Oh, wow... my... my head is spinning! That kiss... it fuckin’ took my breath away. God, Linnie, you do know that I love you so much?”

Lynette’s heart leaped. “Yes! I love you too, my darling, darling brother. Ever since we met, I’ve loved you.”

“Wow... You know we can't...” Tom began. “Well, we're not blood related... I wonder...”

“Shhh. Let's not think of that right now, darling. Look, the two of us are standing here and we're both essentially naked. My pants are on the floor, so are yours. You've only got your t-shirt on. How do you feel, my love?”

“My mind is so fuckin' scrambled, how should I know? Damn, I don't feel any panic. I don't believe this. How did you know...”

He had to stop because at hearing Tom's words, Lynette had squealed with delight and essentially tackled him, latching onto his mouth with hers. Even though he outweighed her by more than sixty pounds, she steered him to her bed and the two flopped down on it. She grabbed the hem of his shirt and Tom helped her pull it off.

“Oh god,” she said, looking at Tom's body. “I've seen dozens of naked boys now and no one comes even close to looking as good as you, my darling. You could be a model in a men's magazine, you know.”

Tom was looking adoringly at Lynette's body.

“You know, I saw Gerry all spread out on my tablet screen this morning. She's the only naked girl that I've seen before you—I've seen girls in bikinis, of course, but you're the prettiest girl I've ever seen, with or without clothes,” he chuckled ruefully.

“C'mere,” Lynette said as she grabbed Tom and gave him another searing kiss. “I told you I'd get you all hot and shit, it so, so backfired; I'm fuckin' hot too now. But I'm dying to try this out after seeing it done so many times in school, but I only want to do it with *my* boy.”

She bent down and took Tom's penis, which had shrunk only a little while they were talking, into her mouth, and with one hand and her lips, began stroking it firmly. Tom gasped at the incredible sensations and felt a rush of lust. Lynette's breasts beckoned, so he reached over to stroke them. He loved how firm they felt and how the pointy nipples poked out like fat thimbles, standing away from her conical, deep pink areolas. Her breasts made a perfect handful and as he stroked them, Lynette moaned in appreciation. She pushed him down flat on the bed and leaned over his belly with her hips near Tom's head. Then she went back to work on his raging erection.

She thought it looked beautiful and it immediately became her favorite part of his body. Tom was cut, his penis was long and fat; she guessed between six and seven inches with about a two inch girth. It curved upward in a slight, graceful arc and the head was like a perfect helmet—not too blunt, not too pointy—just perfect. Lynette had seen plenty of boys' penises to compare it to and she decided that Tom's was just total perfection, her absolute favorite of the dozens of stiff cocks she had seen swinging from the boys' groins as they walked around the school. And sucking on Tom's member was causing her vulva to tingle; she could feel how wet she was getting.

When Tom saw Lynette's body twist around with her pretty little butt near his head, he had to reach out to it to stroke and knead its tempting shape. He moved his hand around one soft but firm buttock globe and slid it into the crease between her cheeks, then down to her hot core. As

his fingers slid into her vulva, she moaned and spread her legs slightly and Tom's hand delved into the heat between her lips. He couldn't believe how wet she was there. He couldn't believe how complicated everything felt there too, his health classes hadn't prepared him for the reality of how a girl's sex really felt, with its assortment of folded flesh, crevasses, and openings. He found a small indentation toward the back of her slit, near her butt, and probed the small opening with a finger. It went in only slightly, but then Lynette grunted and jerked in discomfort when his finger was stopped by a stretchy something around it which flexed as he tried pushing his finger against it.

"Ow, Tom, that hurts..." Lynette grunted.

*Ah, he thought, that must be her cherry. Then at the other end is the clit—that's like the head of my cock, so if I stroke it...*

He did and was rewarded by a little squeal as Lynette rotated her hips. With a growl, Tom reached over and grabbed Lynette's hips and with a heave, lifted her lithe body up so that her hips wound up over his shoulders and her thighs straddling his head. Then he got his first closeup look at a girl's sex organs. He was amazed at both the sight and the scent, a heady, musky odor which made his head spin and his penis lurch. He moved his head closer to take a deep sniff and when his nose touched Lynette's nether lips, she gasped and pressed her hips down, forcing her vulva onto Tom's mouth. And that's when he tasted the juices which were seeping out of her vagina. Backing away slightly, he used his hands to part her lips, and looked. He saw her clitoris, engorged and peeking out from under its hood, and the opening to her love tunnel, partially covered by a papery-looking pale pink membrane with a ragged, irregularly shaped opening in it. Then he moved his head back and began lapping at her vulva with his tongue held flat.

Lynette squealed at the sensation and redoubled her efforts in making love to Tom's penis. She worked her mouth up and down the shaft while running her hands over the part she couldn't get into her mouth, trying to emulate what she had seen the Program girls doing to their partners during their relief sessions.

*I've got some pretty good examples to follow, she thought, as she copied some of the movements and techniques she had seen. I guess the Program isn't too horrible for some of the girls, but damn, so many of the girls I've seen are so frikkin' terrified even after their week's almost over...*

Tom, in the meantime, was using his tongue and fingers to lick and stroke all around Lynette's lower lips, clitoris, and her tight little rosebud, which he rimmed with a finger, using the juices seeping out of her to make it slippery. He couldn't believe how pretty and sexy she looked down there; her pubic hair matched her dark blonde hair, and it was trimmed into a pretty little oval shape around her tight slit. He dove in again and lapped over her clitoris; then, with his lips pursed, he used them to suck on her clitoris, drawing it between his lips, while he lashed its tip with his tongue.

Lynette exhaled in a shuddering moan and went rigid, her legs clamping firmly onto Tom's ears, and she let out a long wail as her pelvic muscles throbbed in a massive orgasm. The feeling of her lower body beginning to pulse around his head, as a massive sensation of lust washed over

him, started a burning deep in his groin. Those sensations, plus the results of Lynette's tongue washing the head of his penis as she jacked her hand on the shaft, sent Tom spiraling into his own powerful release. First one, then a second, spasm in Tom's groin sent a strong jet of thick semen boiling into Lynette's mouth and she choked and gulped at the unexpected feeling of the warm, thick liquid flooding her mouth. A third and fourth jet shot out, this time catching her on the nose and chin. And finally, another pulse of cum simply oozed out of Tom's penis slit, running down the shaft and over Lynette's small hand.

The two of them were exhausted now. Lynette slid off of Tom and crawled around, lying on his chest as he cradled her in his arms. She moved her head close to his and their mouths came together in a romantic, loving kiss. Tom's hands roved down and over Lynette's taut buttocks and he gently stroked and kneaded them while Lynette purred like a satisfied cat.

"I love you so much, my wonderful Tommie," she breathed into his mouth. "That was just brilliant. How did you know what to do? It was perfect."

"I dunno, doll, I guess I just tried different things and when I did something you liked, I did more of it. You were amazing, though. I never knew anything could feel so awesome. You kinda tried to tell me about your seeing blowjobs at school but I knew that even though you wanted to talk about it, you realized that stuff made me uncomfortable. So you stopped. But it looks like the thought of all that sex play at school got you turned on. Did you see a lot of sex play? Blow jobs?"

"Oh yeah. Took notes, too," she giggled. "Basically got a whole class in it. BJ-101, you know?"

"Hell, sweetie, that was graduate level work, no way was it an entry level class you took," he chuckled.

## Chapter 8

Several days before the end of the holidays, Angela received a thick packet of materials in the mail from an independent London school which her research had turned up. She had been searching for highly rated independent schools located within close-in London boroughs with good housing and easy access to central London. She had found a good school in the Southwark-Lambeth area which met her criteria and had requested that the school send an application package. From the published government's student test-score results, it was a good school, and being independent, didn't have to run the Program. The enrollment information had just arrived.

Lynette came into the room.

"What's all that, Mom?" she asked, looking at the papers and brochures.

"I've been checking out some other schools for you guys," she answered. "You know how Tom is terribly unhappy with this 'remote class' arrangement the school is doing with him—he really misses the interaction with the other kids."

"Yeah, he talks about that a lot. What did you find?"

"There are a number of independent schools in London; they don't have that naked Program but I had to eliminate most; either too far to travel, too expensive, or academically limited. This one would be a great candidate, except for what I just read here—it specializes in performing arts and to be accepted, you have to audition or send a video of some kind of performance you were in."

"Oh. Neither Tom nor I were in any plays ... we don't play instruments..." She paged through the brochure. "Hmmm, Norwich Academy. But... yes. Look, Mom." She pointed to a page. "They have a choir and voice classes."

Angela looked at her daughter. "Your school has a choir too. What's your point?"

Lynette struck a pose and began singing.

*"So don't act like it's a bad thing to fall in love with me  
Cause you might screw around and find your dreams come true with me  
Spend all your time and your money just to find out that my love was free  
So don't act like it's a bad thing to fall in love with me, me..."*

"Ta-da!" She stretched out her arms as she finished. "Singing. We both did choral music in Munich, remember? Ever hear Tom sing? He's got a pretty decent voice—we also sing together a lot when we're riding to school. He's got a deeper voice than many boys and with his big chest, well, when he sings he sounds kinda nice. Smooth. Mellow. Sexy even," she giggled.

"Oh yes," Angela exclaimed. "Now that you mention it, I've heard him. You're right, honey. And you too. Your voice is also very good, you know." She giggled. "Cleaned up that verse a bit, didn't we?"

Lynette laughed. "Yeah, wasn't sure how you'd take Justin Timberlake's original blue word in 'Not a Bad Thing.'"

“Ha. Not a problem in that song. Well, I suppose you both could audition since you don't have any performance recordings to send. Would you like that?”

“Sure... but, well, are you certain they don't have the Program? I've got my 'bye' ticket for the Program here right now.”

“You're right. I'll call now, maybe there's someone at the school now even though it's still holidays. Schools are close to starting up again so maybe I can get some info.”

Angela made the call; there was no answer so she left a message on their voice mail system.

“No one to take the call so I left a message,” she told Lynette.

About an hour later, Tom returned from a run with Andrew. The two of them were pretty tired, since they had spent part of the morning lifting weights. Andrew went for a shower first.

“Lynnie,” Tom spoke to her as he stripped off his jacket and hung it up, “Andrew's talked me into running with our school's cross-country track team. The season's about halfway over and the last races are middle of March, he said, but the coaches should be pretty open about kids joining late in the season because the results are about how you perform as a person. No team stuff to learn. I think I'll try it. Just need to see if they make kids run naked,” he grimaced. “I've been spending my P.E. class time in the weight room or on the track. So far, I've avoided any naked crap—and you remember that Coach McGallager lets me use the teachers' shower in the office.”

“Yeah, well, in my regular P.E. classes, the teachers let the naked Program boys wear jocks to run and sports bras for girls. But if you run against other schools that have the Program, there could be some kids...” she began.

“Hell, I know, but I can't keep running away from my problem forever, sis, you know? If that happens, I don't know, maybe I'll just run faster to get away from them,” he smirked as she took a swipe at him. “When school starts, I'll get up early to run, but Andrew can't run with me then 'cause he has to be at his school early.”

“Um, Tommie...?” she asked. A thought had occurred to her.

“Yeah, sweetie?”

“Um, can I run with you when you go? That is, if you don't think I'd hold you back when...”

“Hell, Lynnie, no prob! I'd love your company and you ran just as good as me when we used to do it. You keep up just fine when we bike, too. It'd be super to have a regular running partner.”

“Wow, thanks, should be fun. More time together too.” Lynette suddenly recalled the independent school materials. “Oh, hey bro, Mom's checking out a new school for us. They have several different performing-arts programs and you need to do an audition to get in...”

Tom started to interrupt. She put her hand up.

“... and since you can sing pretty good; me too, Mom says, so we could try out. The school doesn't have the Program so you could go to classes like any student there.”

“Really? No shit, I’d like that a whole lot. Where’s it at?”

Lynette got the brochure and showed it to Tom and he flipped through the pages.

Then Andrew shouted, “Shower’s yours now, Tom!”

“Be right back.” He kissed Lynette but she pulled away.

“Eeww! Take your shower first! You’re all sticky with sweat!”

When Tom came back to the family room, his mom was sitting next to an end table holding her phone and taking notes. Lynette was on the couch, listening. She looked up at Tom.

“Shhh... sit here,” she patted the seat next to her. “She’s talking to the new school,” she whispered.

Tom couldn’t make any sense of the conversation just by listening to his mother, so he looked at Lynette.

“What’s happening?” he whispered.

She shook her head, smiling. “Later.”

He shrugged, but about a minute later, Angela said, “Thanks for calling back; I’ll be in touch. Bye.”

She disconnected and turned to the kids, then looked at her notepad.

“Hi, Tom. Good that you’re here now. Lynette told me she told you about this school—it sounds really good for both of you—that was the head teacher who just called me back. They’re busy at the school doing some remodeling and they’re doing some kind of teacher training sessions there too, so he’s been out of his office a lot today. So here’s what he told me. First, they do need an audition and can’t do that until mid-January and then a committee meets to decide if the person will be accepted. That would be in February at the latest. But the term would be so advanced that it would be too late to transfer over to there; they only run two terms—not the three terms your school has. They end classes in mid-June, not mid-July. So the two of you can’t switch schools till late August, when they start the next year.

“And they definitely don’t have the Program. They have a firm exemption from the London Ed Authority from having to run it; in fact, he told me that they’re doing a pilot trial of something else, it’s much better, he said, and there’s no nudity involved. They have high academic standards and the school’s median standard test scores are above average. I told him you guys sing, but haven’t sung solo or anything, just in a choral class, and he told me not to worry about that; they work with kids of varying experience levels. They’re looking for kids with either talent or a basic ability which can be developed. We discussed a few other things, curriculum, activities, tuition costs, stuff like that, and there were no surprises. He invited the family to come see him and to interview you two. Interested?”

“I think so. I’ll read the brochure again and look at their website,” Tom said.

"I looked already," Lynette told him. "It looks like a nice place. We'll need to go there by tube, though. If we go, no more biking to school. It's South London, like an hour or so on the underground."

"Ah, kids, our lease here runs out in August so we'll be moving," Angela told them. "We want to buy a house anyway. If you get in, we'll move closer. There are some really nice neighborhoods in that area; I've worked on a few homes in Southwark."

Angela had her own interior-decorating and design business.

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When Tom returned to school after the break, he found the track coach before home room began; the coach was delighted that Tom was interested in running with the team.

"I've noticed you running on the track," he told Tom. "You run with fairly good form. Our races are 5 K. Do you know your 5-K time?"

"I haven't timed my longer runs; I go at a comfortable pace and run for 30 to 40 minutes. I run five miles usually, so that's like a seven minute mile. Here at school on the outdoor track, I've timed my metric mile at about 5:30 when I run hard but not going all out. I don't think I could keep up that kind of speed while running on rough ground for 5 K, though. Okay, let me think. I could run a mile, um, maybe at about, let's see, 6:00 to 6:10? A little more? For 5 K then... maybe... ah, 18:15?"

"Blimey, boy, if you can do a 5 K at under 18:30, I definitely want you to run for me. You'd have finished in the fourth or fifth position right off the bat in some of our earlier races. Even as a sweeper, you'd help our team."

"Um, what's a sweeper?"

"A runner who finishes outside of the top five. His placing faster than our opponents' runners pushes their scores up and the team with the fewest points wins the meet."

"Oh. Okay." Tom vowed to himself to look up cross-country scoring.

"I need to ask about runners in the Program," Tom asked diffidently. "I... um... have a problem with the naked stuff... you might have heard."

"Oh right, you're the boy who's been segregated," the coach looked at Tom sharply. "I know a little about a certain 'incident'..." he made finger quotes, "last autumn, only a little, about what supposedly happened, so I'm aware of your situation, I think. As well, the Head mentioned in a staff meeting that you were doing a kind of 'distance learning' trial and that got you neatly out of the classrooms. As for your question, we run cross-country on race courses which are in public areas. Many of our meets are held on golf courses, so there are always random people around. The people who came up with the Program thought that the kids should do everything, and I mean everything, stark bollock-naked, regardless of the kids being in open public areas. But if we forced kids to run cross-country starkers, both the boys and girls would instantly drop off the

team. My boys told me that, back last year when the Program was announced. Anyway, no one runs naked on any of the teams in the league we're in because the meets are in public areas as I said, almost all golf courses, and the golf clubs are pretty conservative and wouldn't allow that kind of nudity on their property anyway. But don't you have that other issue... taking showers? After the meets, we return to the school where the team showers and changes, but I've heard that you use the teachers' shower. I don't know how the team members would accept that, though."

"Um, I thought of that. I'd just go home. I don't live far and I bike," Tom replied.

"You'd have enough energy to bike home after running hard like that?" the coach asked.

"Well, I noticed that I recover pretty quickly, sir. I've biked about 30 miles in under two hours and that's a pretty stiff pace."

"That's true. Well, for the team, you'll need to begin conditioning, so for your P.E. classes from now to March when our season ends, I want you to run on the outdoor track—four laps, inside lane, is a track metric mile—you knew that—but for a 5 K distance, it's twelve and a half laps in that lane. Do only twelve laps each session but run in lane three; twelve laps in that lane is almost exactly 5 K. You don't mind running outdoors in the winter, I reckon. Do you have a timepiece where you can see seconds?" Tom nodded. "So keep track of your times; see if you can do an 18:30 time or better. I'll try to get out there to watch and make any needed suggestions about your running form if I see anything. Sound good?"

"Sure, Coach. I can start today, in fact."

"That's ace, son. Glad to have you. I'll see you later. Hey, you'll need a late pass to class—let me give you one."

Later, at Tom's first practice session, the coach came out to time Tom's run and he came in at a bit over 18:35. The coach was grinning ear to ear at his time.

"Armstrong, good run. You can only improve, too. I noticed a few details about your form..."

He gave Tom some pointers and had Tom jog a lap using his suggestions.

"Yeah, Coach. That feels a little better when I do it that way."

"Good, it'll help your stride in the middle distance. Now go get cleaned up."

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That evening, Tom and Lynette were doing their homework together; ever since their first romantic session, doing homework together had become their normal routine, although they both had carefully steered away from another romantic encounter. They both felt somewhat embarrassed at how far they had gone. Lynette was very jittery tonight, however. Tom noticed.

"Sweetie, what the hell's bugging you that you can't keep still?"

"Damn. Tommie, today at lunch—well, when lunch was done—ohmygod... Can't stop thinking about it..."

“Shit. Must be sex stuff again. Well, if y’think talking about it will help, maybe I can see if I can listen without getting my sensibilities too damaged,” he winked at her.

“Funny you’re not,” she pouted. “Yeah, well, when half the lunch period is over, the Program kids become fair game for the gropers—you knew that, I think?”

Tom nodded. “You mentioned that fact once or fifty times, I believe.”

Lynette stuck out her tongue at him. “So this guy goes over to where the naked kids sit; they all sit together—for mutual support, I suppose, and he asks one of the guys to do oral sex on a girl there. The girl said, ‘That’s not a reasonable request!’ So he goes, ‘But if you both agree, then it is.’ He turns to the guy and gives him that reasonable request, to lick the girl, and the guy makes a disgusted-like face.

“Then the girl asks the other kids at her table what they think they should do. Well, they seemed to all agree that if both parties were okay with doing it, then why not? One said, in fact, ‘I saw a relief session in class once where a guy went down on a girl.’ Then several of the naked girls pulled the naked guy aside for a minute and were yakking at him; he began shaking his head but eventually shrugged and then they kissed him. Well, the two kids finally did agree and they started in and after a bit of hurried whispering, they got into a 69 on the table top. They looked uncomfortable; the girl was on top and must have pressed down too hard on the guy under her—it was a hard table, so she lifted up her hips so she was off his chest. Now her ass was sticking up and the guy had to lean up a little to reach her pussy.

“One of the other naked guys, I later found out he was the girl’s partner, was stroking his dick and she looked over and saw him doin’ it. I heard her call out something like, ‘I’m so fuckin’ hot, Sam, I’m gaggin’ for your cock. Shit, I need you in my fanny!’ Heh, see, I’m pickin’ up those funny British slang words... Anyway, he climbs up behind her, right over the guy’s head, and just pushes his cock right into her pussy. She screamed when he thrust into her. And shit, if that guy on the bottom didn’t look like he was licking his balls as the boyfriend went in and out of the girl’s pussy, I’d think I was blind.

“Then I heard someone closer to them call out, ‘Blimey, look, it’s goddamn blood—he took her cherry!’ That was totally what happened! Her boyfriend took her damned virginity on a lunchroom table. The scene was incredible. Some boys even creamed their pants; I could tell when I saw them rubbing their crotches, then grimace, and then run out of the lunchroom—to the loo, I assume.” She giggled. “Girls were red-faced and had their hands under their clothes. So fuckin’ hot!”

Lynette didn’t realize that her own hand was under her waistband, stroking her vulva, until she noticed where Tom was looking. She blushed, pulled her hand up, and looked at him.

“Tom, your face is all bright red. You okay?”

“Shit, Lynnie, now *I’m* horny as all fuck!”

“Ooooo, maybe it’s time for some self-help again,” she cooed seductively.

She got off her bed and stood in front of him.

“No scarf now, okay, darling?”

Tom gulped and nodded.

She bent down, hooked her fingers in the waistband of Tom's pants and pulled them down, urging him to lift his butt. Then she pulled his underpants off, freeing a rampant erection. His shirt was next. Then she pulled on his hands, prompting him to stand up. She pulled him over to her closet door to the full-length mirror there.

“Look, Tom, look in the mirror. You're naked. A girl undressed you. How do you feel?”

Tom's head was spinning; he felt dizzy and disoriented. His penis was standing proudly, hard as an iron bar, and he was trying to sort out the sensations he was feeling, because Lynette was running her hands over his entire body: chest, abs, penis, butt, nipples, cheeks, hair, everywhere.

“Tommie, darling, time to undress me now,” she murmured in his ear and stood on her tiptoes to tickle his ear with her tongue.

Tom turned to her slowly, almost mechanically, in a daze, and she took his hands and placed them on the hem of her shirt. He pulled it upward, exposing first her tummy, and then her bra-covered chest, until the shirt was raised over her head and slid off of her upraised arms. He tossed it on the chair beside her and dropped his arms, shaking with his reaction to taking off another person's clothes. Tom tried not to look directly at his sister's tight tummy muscles and the frilly red bra that covered her young breasts.

“Keep going, darling, you're doing fine...” Lynette prompted him. “Shorts next.”

With unsteady hands, he unfastened the waist button of her cutoff jeans and carefully pulled her fly zipper down. He stopped again, shaking, but Lynette grabbed his hands and put them on the waist of her shorts, prompting him to open their front and expose the top of her satiny red panties. Lynette giggled and wiggled her hips.

“Pull down, now, sweetie,” and he did; she wiggled her hips as her shorts fell, stopping at her knees.

“See?” she said. “Not so bad, right? Let's keep going, darling.”

Tom had begun to sweat. “I'm really trying but this isn't easy, Linnie...”

“Just take one step at a time, darling. Help my shorts all the way off.”

Tom leaned over and helped her kick off the shorts, which she left lying on the floor nearby. Tom returned his gaze to his sibling's partially undressed figure; then blushing, dropped his gaze to the floor.

“My bra, Tom. Do my bra next.”

It took all of Tom's willpower to move his eyes away from the floor to her chest and then to

think about removing Lynette's bra, but then almost without his thinking about it, his hands took over the task and circled around to her back, searching for the clasp to unfasten the hooks. After a few seconds' fumbling and Lynette's giggling, he succeeded. As soon as he unhooked the restraint and its tension was released, he pulled his hands away from her shoulders as if they were blazing hot.

"Not too bad there," she chuckled. "I've heard that most boys have to take a course in bra unhooking 'cause they are soooo bad at learning how to do that job."

She snickered again and wiggled her shoulders, letting the bra straps slide off her arms and the garment fell to the floor, exposing her perky pink mounds to his view. Tom took in a shuddering breath through his parched lips; it sounded like the wind blowing dry autumn leaves as his breath sucked into his lungs.

"Okay, my handsome stud, one last step," Lynette prompted. "Look here."

She pointed to the tight satin panties which covered her crotch, fitting closely just like a glove on a hand. Tom shivered as he noticed the definite camel toe in the fabric where it stretched tightly between her two thighs. Suddenly he became aware that the sight was so voluptuous that his penis, which had flagged a bit, had again reacted and was now erect and throbbing.

Lynette lightly ran her finger around the elastic waist of her panties, pushing it beneath the material and moving the garment slightly down off her hips.

"Tommie, now you continue doing this," she instructed in a choked voice.

Tom slowly reached out with his finger, joining Lynette's finger, and their two fingers together began to slowly pull her panties down, gradually exposing, first her lower abdomen, and then the top of her pubic mound.

Tom's eyes were tightly closed and his teeth were clenched as her bright red panties dropped down over her thighs, slid over her knees, then dropped and puddled at her feet. Lynette stepped over the garment and kicked it to the side.

"Tommie?" she prompted. "You in there, sweetie? Eyes open now."

Tom realized that his eyes were closed and he wasn't breathing. He felt that he didn't dare take a breath because doing so might trigger his panic, but he suddenly became aware that his lungs were demanding air. With a gasp, he exhaled loudly and drew in a needed breath.

Then he realized that his naked sister was standing right in front of him.

"Look at me, Tommie," she breathed. "Like what you see?"

Tom's eyes finally focused. "Holy shit," he murmured as his conscious mind returned its control. "Fuck, you're so gorgeous, Linnie."

Lynette took a deep breath and, moving as if in slow motion, leaned into Tom. She looked down at herself as her breasts neared his chest. At the first touch of her nipples against his skin, she

twisted sideways back and forth a bit, rubbing their sensitive tips across his chest. As she did, a burst of heat instantly blossomed inside her, just below her belly button, and radiated down into her groin. The touch of his naked skin against hers felt awesome so she moved her hands around his waist, pulling herself against Tom's strong body and grinding her belly against Tom's erection. She could feel the wet, slippery moisture of his precum spreading on the skin between them.

"How's it feel? Any panic?" she whispered.

"N... n... no," Tom stuttered. "I'm flooded with crazy sensations, but nothing like panic, and..."

Lynette, gasping with relief, choked back a sob and attacked Tom's mouth, having to pull down his head to reach his lips. They spent a few glorious minutes dueling with their tongues.

Finally, her neck stiff, she reluctantly pulled away.

Tom sighed and rubbed his own neck. "You're an awesome kisser, Linnie," he sighed. "God, that lunchroom scene really turned you on something fierce! You attacked me like a wild animal!"

"Seriously, Tommie, let's check something. This is all about you, darling," Lynette said, smiling.

She turned him toward the mirror and took one of his hands in both of hers, then stood next to him.

"Look at the two of us, darling, both totally naked. Look at yourself, at your buff body, you're a total hunk, you are. Look at how proudly your gorgeous cock is standing tall, your tight abs, your smooth, broad chest, massive arms. See those thighs, like tree trunks, how they join your hips. You really don't have a runner's body, you know, thin and lithe. Yours just looks strong, built for power. Looks awesome."

She twisted him a little to the right. "And your bum! Bums of steel!" She slapped the nearest cheek and sniggered. "God, you could crack nuts between your bum cheeks! Not your own nuts, though, darling. They're for me. You're just perfect! How do you feel being naked with me?"

Tom shivered a tiny bit and shook his head.

"I don't believe it, sweetie. I don't feel anything like even a hint of panicking now—well, there is something like the distant echo of that feeling. But it's not me I'm looking at, it's you. You're just so freakin' beautiful. You described me, so let me tell you what I see. I see long, dark blonde hair in a cute pony-tail, the most amazing eyelashes framing the most amazing hazel eyes. A long sensuous neck. Broad shoulders and chest with the perkier tits ever—such a cute shape and they come to a point at your nice fat nipples. Hourglass waist and luscious hips. Your pussy is a tight, perfect slit and I love how the hair is trimmed. And your legs are long and smooth. You're not that tall—but you have a perfect pixie fairy body. And you have the sweetest little bubble-butt too. And I love every inch of all of you."

She had her arms looped around his neck, so he grabbed her behind her thighs and pulled her up

so her legs straddled his hips and their faces were eye to eye. Their mouths met in another passionate kiss. Tom walked over to the bed with her as they kissed; then he bent over and laid her down on it with her feet dangling over the side. He squatted down, parted her legs, and got between them. He looked up at her.

“I need to try this again. Think of that guy licking the girl on the lunchroom table you told me about,” he grinned at her, then dove in.

Tom let his lips brush her labia and his nose sucked in the fragrance of teenaged girl, a hot teenaged girl, not quite an earthy scent, more like tangy and musky, and the source was open for his tongue's touch. As soon as Tom's tongue touched her flesh, Lynette's hands pulled on his head, forcing his face into her wet vulva. Tom licked up and down her labia, forcing his tongue into the crease between her outer and inner lips but avoiding her little pearl. Lynette was moaning and gasping, trying to steer Tom's head toward her clitoris but he resisted her pulling at him. But soon he stopped the teasing and, after one good slurp to gather Lynette's juices into his mouth, Tom moved his tongue up and located her little button. With the sensation of Tom's first laving of her clitoris, Lynette couldn't stand the anticipation of what she *knew* was to follow.

“Uuuhhhh! Tommie! Yes, yes, aahhhh, there! Oh! Lick me! Do it!”

Tom obeyed. Tom would do *anything* Lynette asked him to do. Using his fingers, he gently spread her lips apart, worked her little clitoris with his tongue, and sucked it between his lips.

“Unh... uggghh...nnnnn... aaahhh... nnnnn. NNNNNN!”

Tom grinned to himself—he was having quite an effect on his wonderful step-sister. This was way better than the first time he did this. He kept licking.

"Uuunnhh... eeeeeppp... ooooo... nnnnn... Unh, unh... nnnnn. Ohhhh! *Fuck!* Aaahhhh! Tommie! I'm... ahhh... I'm... unh... I'm... It's... Yessss... It's *COMING!* Ohgod-ohgod-ooogod! Yaaahhhhhh..." she heaved in a great sighing screech.

Her body went rigid, then her hips arched into Tom's face as she climaxed ... and went limp. Tom rose from his crouch and lay down on the bed next to her; he scooped her into his arms and hugged her against him. He rained little kisses on her eyelids, nose, and cheek, gently caressing her firm nipples, waiting for her to rejoin the world. Soon Lynette's eyelids fluttered and her eyes opened. He watched as her hazel eyes focused and found his.

“My god, Tommie, what the *HELL* did you do? That's gotta be the best thing I've ever felt in my whole entire life. Oh, sweetie, I love you so much!”

“I love you too, darling.”

Tom felt Lynette's hand softly drift over his hip and slowly envelop his rigid shaft. She looked over at him with a mixture of amusement, curiosity, and frank lust.

“Poor baby... you're still like a rock. Does it ever get soft?”

“Heh... Not when you're naked with me and especially not with your doing that!”

Lynette had begun stroking him. "You like this, right?"

"Oh yeah. It's really pleased to meet its playmate again."

*Giggle.* "Cool. God, I love this thing. When it's hard like this, its skin feels like silk."

Lynette rose up and slid down the bed, meanwhile trailing her tongue down Tom's broad chest and across his flat, hard stomach. His stomach wasn't the only hard thing in her sight. Lynette shivered; she realized that she was yearning to take him in her mouth again.

She smiled down at Tom's very excited penis and as she watched, a bubble of clear fluid oozed out of the little slit in its head.

"Wow," she murmured. "Your thing really looks primed to fire now. When I saw that orgy in the lunchroom today, all I could think of was when we first were naked together."

"To tell the truth," Tom whispered, his eyes fixed on Lynette's erect nipples, "I was scared at what was happening then and felt very embarrassed afterwards. But I think about you every night as I fall asleep."

Lynette groaned at that and grabbing him, started to work her hand up and down.

Tom gasped and Lynette felt the rivulet of juices leaking out between her legs growing as she began to stroke him. She thought about the other naked boys she saw all day in school; it wasn't that Tom was particularly bigger than most of them. Maybe he was a little longer than everyone else, certainly somewhat thicker, but his penis was just sooo perfect! She *had* to make love to it, she simply was totally enamored with it. She licked her lips at the thought of how that marvelous penis would feel stretching her insides and...

*Oh shit, he's my brother and we can't do that... but... maybe...*

Shuddering then, she decided that what she needed was to love it with her *upper* lips and, letting her legs stretch out behind her as she lay between his legs, she propped herself on her elbows and slowly pumped him.

"Oh Linnie, oh fuck, that feels so good." he sighed.

"And I bet I can make it feel even better!"

She moved her mouth down to the base of his shaft and ran her tongue along his penis's length, up to the corona. Then swirling her tongue across his swollen head, she shuddered as another dollop of pre-cum oozed out of the head's opening and her tongue picked it up. Tom moaned as she repeated her first motion in reverse, licking all the way down the other side to the root. She gave his balls a kiss and, smiling up at him, started to rub his glorious penis against her cheek. Tom was oozing copiously now and she could feel her face getting icky from the slick sensation. But to show his penis how much she adored it, she moved her head around and rubbed his drooling glans all over her other cheek.

Lynette looked up at Tom's face. He was wide-eyed, staring down at her, so with a big grin,

Lynette opened her mouth and slowly engulfed about a third of the fat organ's length.

"Goddamn," Tom moaned, "that looks so fuckin' hot!"

Gratified at Tom's reaction, Lynette pulled up a little and giggled around the fat, silky head of his penis. Then opening wider, she took him as far down her throat as she could while she kept her eyes locked on Tom's. Feeling her gag reflex start to tickle her throat, she pulled back and then closed her eyes and sighed. She was thoroughly enjoying the sensation of holding Tom's rock-hard flesh in her mouth, marveling at how it could be so soft but so rigid at the same time.

She opened her eyes again and locked onto Tom's as she delighted in listening to his little sighs, whimpers, and moans; then she started bobbing her head on the shaft behind the coronal ridge. Now Tom, with a shudder, reached down to Lynette's head and brushed her hair away from her mouth so he could watch his penis sliding in and out of it. Tom's eyes kept flicking back and forth between Lynette's eyes and the sight of her lips wrapped around his organ.

Speeding up her head's bobbing, Lynette wrapped her fingers around his penis's root and began using her hand to follow her lips, stroking him, while using her tongue to lash the shaft as her lips slid along its surface. Tom groaned at the new sensation and his fingers clutched Lynette's hair while his hips began moving, attempting to push his penis deeper into her mouth. Groaning in lust now, Lynette reached down and began fingering her clitoris as she kept her lips firmly fastened around him, sucking and licking. Now she kept her head still and used her tongue to swirl around the head of Tom's penis while she began caressing his testicles, scraping them lightly with her nails, and when he grunted his approval at that sensation, she ducked her head into his crotch and began licking them, popping one into her mouth.

"Oh fuck, Linnie, shi-i-it..."

"You like?" she pulled off and asked him, then slid her cheek along the shaft of Tom's penis again.

"I... I can't believe how good that feels...."

She suddenly captured his penis in her mouth again and began bobbing her head on it as fast as she could while she used her hand to pump away at the part that she couldn't get in her mouth. Tom began bouncing his hips up, trying to thrust harder into Lynette's mouth and she began grinding her own hips into the mattress, trying to assuage the burning sensation in her vulva. Then she pulled her mouth off and began using both hands on the shaft, stroking up and down, and using her tongue to lash his glans.

"Fuck... fuck... do it, do it," Tom gasped, "keep doin' that, don't stop, don't stop!" He was groaning continuously and his thighs began quivering.

Feeling his whole groin area begin to shudder, Lynette pressed her thumb into his taint, the area behind his balls, as she applied suction around the corona and kept her tongue swirling around the crown.

"Gaahhhh... uh, uh, uh," Tom cried as he exploded in Lynette's mouth.

As her mouth filled with Tom's thick, creamy cum, she grunted at the sensation and she felt her belly clench. She felt so close to cumming herself, just from the feeling of Tom's cum pulsing into her mouth and sliding down her throat. Tom still had his hands holding onto her head all through his orgasm and his hips kept jerking as his balls unloaded their payload. Lynette gave his penis a final mighty suck, attempting to drain Tom of every possible drop of cum, making him whimper at the intense sensation. As Lynette felt her own desire peak, she pressed hard on her clitoris and came in a nice, gentle, glowing cum of her own.

Fully sated now, she licked her lips and gave Tom a loving smile. His face was still screwed up in passion as his breathing slowly returned to normal. He noticed her smiling up at him.

"C'mere, you," he growled. "You're fuckin' awesome, darling."

She crawled into Tom's arms and they cuddled, trading little kisses.

"Tom..." Lynette began, "I don't know what to do. I love you so much... While in my passion of sucking you, I was thinking of us *really* making love. If we keep this up... I'm afraid. Would us doing that be so wrong? What if our parents had never married. Then we could be a couple for real. So what would be wrong if we're a couple anyway? I've loved you forever, ever since we met, even before they got married."

Tom groaned. "I know, sweetie. I feel the same. I'm sure this wouldn't be incest since we're not biologically related. But we're meant to be together; I can't imagine life without you and me together. We'll figure it out, dearest."

## Chapter 9

Two weeks later, the siblings went with Angela to the new school for their interview, tour, and audition. There were to be two parts to their vocal audition; one was to sing two songs of their choice, first doing it *a capella*, and then to a musical accompaniment of their choice. The second part was sight-reading a song from sheet music. Both Tom and Lynette had taken a choral music class in school in Munich, where choral music was a big deal, and had become familiar enough with written music to follow the notation. The interview and audition went smoothly and they were told that they would get a formal letter in about two weeks, after the admission committee met, but were informally assured that they were qualified for attending the school.

Meanwhile, Tom kept up with his video classes. But over the past few months, the rumor that Tom got freaked out when he encountered nudity had been quietly circulating among the students and a couple of times, several of the more pushy girls who had been selected for the Program decided to try to embarrass him somehow. One tried to crash the library with a few friends during period changes to get a reaction from him and others tried to find ways to confront him when they thought that he would be in the school halls. However, the librarian kept any encroaching naked students out of the library during school hours and Tom found ways he could hide during class changes. So gradually the pranks which some of the girls were trying to play became boring and it soon stopped.

Something better was happening to Tom's nudity panics as a result of his romance with his step-sister. He found that her nudity had no effect of causing panic or even anxiety on him at all anymore. He was becoming far less anxious at being naked with her and he looked forward to the occasions when they had privacy at home to satisfy each other; this was happening more frequently since their mother now had an extensive clientele and they were alone during their afternoons at home. But despite their growing intimacy, they agreed to limit their sex play to oral stimulation only. He noticed at school, when he got some infrequent glimpses of naked kids, his reaction was becoming less intense, and reported that fact to Lynette, who grinned and happily took the credit for his successful "psych treatment."

Tom had begun running with the track team when school started in the new year. It was mid-February and the cross-country season had just four more weeks to go. In his first two meets, he didn't run as well as he wanted, finishing in eighth and then seventh place, but his coach was still pleased with his performance. Tom had been watching the running strategy of the best runners and noticed that they tended to run in a pack for the first two-thirds of the course, pacing each other, and then letting the true race begin in the final third where conditioning and stamina would be the difference between a scoring finish and an also-ran. Up to now, Tom had been running his own race, not paying much attention to the others, basically using the clock as his race opponent and pushing for his best time. He found that when he kept to a steady pace, he got passed during the final mile and didn't have enough energy left to catch the faster runners.

So for the next race, he decided to modify his tactics. Practicing on the school track, he ran the first two-thirds of the 5 K with a slower, loping stride, one which allowed him to breathe deeply but was only about fifteen seconds slower than his normal pace. Then on the last two laps, he

opened up and tried to run like hell. He was amazed when he realized that technique had shaved about 45 seconds off his best time! It was a 17:50 run. That would have put him in third place in the last meet.

With his new tactics in mind, Tom began the race and hung back with the fastest guys on his team. Two of them looked over at Tom and nodded. The loose grouping of about nine boys just tooled along, each glancing around at each other, gauging the potential competition and jockeying for position when the time for their breakaway came. The two-thirds mark came up and Tom noticed that a long, steadily rising slope began on the course right after the distance marker. He realized that a breakaway at that point would leave a runner with fewer resources for a strong finish and, as many of the other runners sped up at the mark, Tom, along with two others, one of them a teammate, held slightly back. The two shot a quick look at Tom and then bore down, with Tom pacing them. Where the ground began to level out at about 600 yards later, the two of them took off and Tom dug in too. A dozen seconds later, they rounded a curve in the course as it left a stand of trees and they were now twenty to fifty yards behind a very spread-out group of lead runners. The finish line was still about a half-mile ahead, but Tom felt he had plenty of strength, so he picked up his pace again as the two others running near him did too.

The three began to pass runners from the original larger group, the tight pack had dispersed greatly as each runner was now running as hard as he could. Tom kept passing runners until only two were still in front of him, the two who had held back with him. He resolutely tried to close the gap with the closer runner but now the finish line was less than a hundred yards ahead. Suddenly he heard a runner closing on him from behind; the boy was running furiously and threatening to overtake Tom. Finding energy he didn't know he had, Tom bore down again and tried to lengthen his stride while keeping his rhythm. In the last fifty yards, he was now closing on the runner in second place! Maybe he could catch the guy! It didn't happen, though; Tom crossed the line just a second behind the second-place finisher and only five seconds behind the winner.

He ran a dozen more paces and then sank to the ground and lay there on his back, deep breathing for a minute, then got back to his feet.

"Hey Armstrong!" he heard behind him.

Turning, he saw Roland Crawford coming up. He was his teammate, the guy who was in first place.

"Shit, mate, you ran a brilliant one!" Roland shouted as he embraced Tom. "Perfect race strategy, mate, glad you're on the team."

Their coach had jogged over to congratulate them. "We got 1-3-6-7-8 in the race, guys, 25 points, and that's a win!"

The other team members had come up and began congratulating Roland and Tom.

"You ran a great race, Armstrong," the coach said. "I was concerned when I didn't see you in the pack when they came out of that last turn. Then three of you just roared out like you had jetpacks

on. What happened?"

Roland smirked and poked Tom in the chest. "This bloke saw it, coach; he's got potential. The last mile started on an upgrade. We haven't seen that before, it's nasty. Who laid out this course? Doing that was really tricky. My dad told me what to do when that happens; you hang back and let the others waste their breath on the uphill race. I kept my distance pace going till the grade leveled, then I dug in. So did Armstrong and that third bloke. We just powered through the others—they didn't have the kick, they wasted it on the hill. How did you know what to do, mate?" he asked Tom.

Tom shrugged. "I saw what you said. If I took off going uphill, I'd have nothing left at the end."

"Smart running," the coach praised them. "You others, see what I've been telling you? Running speed, pace, posture, and rhythm are all important, but sometimes it's strategy that will win the race."

With his strong finish, Tom found himself a popular team member now; the other members had been a little aloof, mainly because of Tom's strange reputation around school. He seemed to be a kind of an outcast who was somehow being shielded from the rest of the students. But he actually turned out to be an okay kind of bloke—except when he disappeared at shower times. It seemed that he didn't want to use the locker room either. Very strange. Still an okay bloke, though.

In fact, it was Tom's reputation as a strange kid which led some of the boys to want to try to humiliate him somehow. Two of the girls who had been unsuccessful in ambushing Tom had mentioned their plans to tease Tom to their boyfriends. The girls had thought it would be fun to try to embarrass or humiliate him by coming onto him while they were naked but then leave him horny and hanging. It wasn't quite common knowledge why Tom was being shielded from the other students, but it had become strongly suspected that it was because he was embarrassed by nudity. Many of the kids reasoned that if the Program had been invented to wipe out excessive modesty among the teens in secondary school, and they themselves had been forced to go through that ordeal—which wasn't at all pleasant—then why wasn't Tom singled out for Program treatment as a prime example of excessive modesty?

The students in the school knew that kids were put in the Program for various infractions, even for some trivial ones or ones completely unrelated to the Program objectives. Tardiness, language use, teasing, and in one case, when a boy was reluctant to closely examine a girl during a health class studying anatomy, the teacher put him on the Program for the rest of the day, because of what appeared to be his excessive modesty. He objected, insisting that he was simply showing the girl some respect as she was being treated like an object and not a person. His protestations went for nothing and he had to spend the day naked. But in Tom's case, obviously he must have somehow been exempted from selection for the Program, which seemed to be an impossible answer—no one had ever been exempted, for any reason, to anyone's knowledge, but regardless of his special treatment, he was also being isolated from everyone else in the school. So what was it with this Armstrong bloke, anyway? Why was he getting this special treatment?

Their jealousy over Tom's apparent special status led a few boys to try to figure out a way to get

him put into the Program. Some of the ideas they considered were to get him framed for a school infraction, one which would generally result in a Program punishment. Another idea was to try to implicate him in some kind of scheme like making it appear that he was trying to sell pictures of Program kids to websites; another was to plant fake rumors about his mistreating a girl in the Program—they'd need a girl's help to pull that one off. They even talked to a student office assistant to see if she could somehow sneak Tom's name into the Program selection process. They spent weeks trying to find a way to make any of these ideas work. But Tom's almost complete isolation from the students in the school made it seem impossible to come up with any plan which wouldn't also get themselves into trouble.

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The cross-country season wound down at the end of March and by then, Tom had competed in two more races. He didn't match his third-place finish in either race, but he did finish in fifth place in the next race and fourth in the following one and those finishes were enough to cement his good standing with his team. His coach told him that his times were excellent for a newcomer to the sport, and if he kept working on developing good running mechanics, continued to improve his stamina, and kept up with learning racing strategy, he could become a top level runner. The coach also asked Tom if he'd be interested in joining the stadium track team but Tom had no interest in sprints or middle-distance running. Besides, he would be changing schools after year's end, but no one needed to know that...

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**[Dialect Note:** *Hear them down in Soho Square, dropping haitches everywhere...* As in the musical "My Fair Lady," I chose to highlight the wonderful variety of British dialects in this story of Tom and Lynette. But two particular dialects, Cockney and Brum, are quite difficult to render in writing and therefore to understand—as they are, too, in actual speech for the ear unfamiliar with these colorful dialects. So to help you understand the conversation between Tom and Lynette and the British pupils in this chapter, dialect "translations" of Liz' and Jess' dialog are shown in indented blue italics.]

With the coming of warmer weather, Tom and Lynette began to go on lengthy weekend bike rides, taking their lunches along. Late in April, the two siblings rode out to Lee Valley Park to spend the day riding on the park's extended bike trail, riding from Waltham Cross to Ware along the Lee River. They were riding near St Margarets when they passed a group of teens standing on the riverbank, tossing little stones into the water.

"Hallo, there," one of the teens hailed them from a distance when he saw them riding on the trail.

"Hi!" Tom and Lynette called back.

They stopped as the small group came up the bank and across the meadow to the bike path.

"Y'rite mates?" one boy said as he approached

"Sure...?" Tom responded uncertainly while Lynette called back, "All right."

Lynette smiled at him. "Tom," she whispered, "The guy asked, 'Hi, how are you?'—it's Brit slang. You *really* need to socialize with the natives!"

There were three girls and two boys in the group.

One of the girls spoke. ““Ey, I’m Jess. Tha’s Sarah an’ Liz. Da blokes are Mark an’ Rich.””

Lynette answered, “Good to meet you guys. I’m Lynette and this is Tom.”

Sarah was looking at them sharply. “Haven’t seen you in school, you new here?”

Tom shook his head. “Not from around here. We live in North London, over by East Finchley. Our school is Friern Barnet and we’re year tens.”

“Cor... that’s a hike away,” Mark commented.

“About 18 miles from here, we figure,” Tom answered. “We’ll bike maybe 40 miles today. Lynette and I love to ride; this is our longest ride this year.”

““Ey, you blokes go’ ‘ime ‘o ‘alk?”” Jess asked. “We’ve bin ‘alkin abou’ school an’ wonderin’ abou’ ‘hings in o’her schools?””

*“Hey, you blokes got time to talk?” Jess asked. “We’ve been talking about school and wondering about things in other schools?”*

Lynette looked at Tom and he nodded. “Sure,” she said. “Sit here on the grass? We’ve got ground cloths in our bike panniers... but can you talk slower? It’s hard understanding you, you know.”

The others laughed. “Jess has a really strong Cockney accent,” Mark grinned. “We tease her about it sometimes, but she’s cool with us. Doesn’t hurt that she’s the smartest one in our class neither, isn’t she.”

“Oi, we got some blankets to sit on too,” Rich interrupted. “Over there with our bikes.”

He ran to get the blankets.

When they got settled, Tom asked where they went to school.

“It’s Haileybury sgool,” Liz said. “It’s in Hertfordshire, a mile frum eya, an’ it’s a boarden sgool, so many of us liv’ the’er. Soy, we got that Naked in Sgool cobblers in ar sgool an’ we wanna hear what happens in other schools. Liven at the sgool with the Program ain’t loike normal because we’re always on sgool grounds duren the week—most weekends too. We heard abart in other sgools sum nasty rot happenen an’ I read in the news an’ on lion abart other potty or horrid things; really horrid.”

*“It’s Haileybury School,” Liz said. “It’s in Hertfordshire, a mile from here, and it’s a boarding school, so many of us live there. Say, we got that Naked in School garbage in our school and we want to hear what happens in other schools. Living at the school with the Program ain’t like normal because we’re always on school grounds during the week—most weekends too. We heard about in other schools some nasty rot happening and I read in the news and on line about other potty or horrid things; really horrid.”*

Lynette and Tom looked alarmed. “Really? Potty and horrid things? What happened?” she breathed.

“Well, fer ‘un, everybody learns abart what happened when the Program just started up... cor, mates,” she interjected when she saw blank looks on Lynette’s and Tom’s faces. “Yaouw don’t knoo abart what happened at that fust sgool?”

*“Well, for one, everybody learns about what happened when the Program just started up... cor, mates,” she interjected when she saw blank looks on Lynette’s and Tom’s faces. “You don’t know about what happened at that first school?”*

They both shook their heads.

“Blimey... well, this ‘un wench, erm, tewthree ‘eass ago I fink, she committed suicide because she was well religious an’ thought that been picked fer the Program was God punishen ‘er fer summat. She wrote in ‘er diary that she couldn’t figure ert why she was punished, so she got a bunch of pills somehoo, an’ took them all.”

*“Blimey...well, this one girl, erm, two years ago I think, she committed suicide because she was very religious and thought that being picked for the Program was God punishing her for something. She wrote in her diary that she couldn’t figure out why she was punished, so she got a bunch of pills somehow, and took them all.”*

“Oh hell, hadn’t heard about that.” Tom said, dismayed.

“Well, ‘hey make every schoolkid read wha’ she wro’e in ‘er diary,” Jess objected. “Hah come you didn’?”

*“Well, they make every schoolkid read what she wrote in her diary,” Jess objected. “How come you didn’t?”*

Lynette frowned. “Oh, I heard some kids in school mention something about a school girl’s diary, in passing. It didn’t seem important so I didn’t ask about it.”

Liz looked at her. “But *everyone* needs ter read that. It’s in the culture class in year nine.”

“Ah, okay,” Lynette said. “We went to school in Germany last year.”

Liz shrugged. “Oh. Well. It was really heartbreaken’. If only she ‘ad told someone ‘oo she felt. that’s why readen it an’ discussen it is required; ter let babboys knoo ‘oo ter terk abart their inner feelings an’ abart treaten’ babboys in the Program properly.”

*Liz shrugged. “Oh. Well. It was really heartbreaking. If only she had told someone how she felt. That’s why reading it and discussing it is required; to let kids know how to talk about their inner feelings and about treating kids in the Program properly.”*

Lynette asked, “What’s ‘babboys’?”

Mark smiled. “Means ‘kids.’”

Lynette shook her head. “Somehow I think that getting some kids to open up about their inner feelings would take more than reading and discussing a diary.”

There was a chorus of agreement to that.

“Liz? Where are you from?” Lynette asked. “Your accent isn’t like Jess’.”

Liz giggled. “Naaa, not suth London. I’m frum Walsall, neah Burminum, an’ I proudly spek Brum.”

*Liz giggled. “No, not south London. I’m from Walsall, near Birmingham, and I proudly speak Brum.”*

Lynette looked blank. Mark clarified, “Birmingham. It’s hard for outsiders to catch all of our speech differences.”

Lynette nodded. “Same in Canada. Quebec has some interesting accents. The U.S. does too. You should hear the English some people in the southern U.S. speak.”

Rich spoke then. “Plenty o’ accents here too. Welch, Yorkies, Liverpuds, more. Cor, mates, you must got the Program, roight?”

Lynette nodded.

“Yeah, well, lots o’ kids in school heah hate it; they’s scared o’ the idea of being bollock-naked in front o’ everyone. Some blokes really freak out when they get picked. Happens lots in our school. What ‘bout youas?”

Lynette shrugged. “I’m not sure why our school seems to be different than some others I’ve read about in the tabloids or on line. The first day in our school, back last fall, they actually got a bunch of volunteers to agree to do their week as the first ones. And in that first week, no one seemed to go crazy and the teachers didn’t do demos, but I didn’t get to see much that week ‘cause Tom was sick and he had to be on meds. I was kinda making sure he was okay and didn’t pay much attention to any Program stuff.

“Then when the second week began, something happened that kinda changed everything in the whole school. What happened that morning was the main school office got trashed, like it really got wrecked badly, and suddenly the attitude of the head teacher—all of our teachers, in fact—changed and teachers began paying close attention to the Program kids, like carefully monitoring the halls, keeping the kids safe, that kind of stuff. And other kids tell me that the classroom demos are really tame compared to what I’ve heard happens in other schools. None of my classes have had any kind of demo.”

“Why d’you think tha’ happened?” Rich asked.

“There was this rumor goin’ around in our school that a kid in the Program tore up the office in revenge or something and that’s why the teachers got so careful—maybe they figured that people could get seriously hurt if a kid in the Program went crazy and attacked a teacher or wrecked things, like what seemed to have happened in the office—crap like that. But no one who’s been in the Program knows what happened, and even more strange, it seems that no one was punished for the damage.”

Tom leaned over to Lynette and whispered, "Good one, sis. Nice misdirection."

She whispered back, "Had a good teacher."

Lynette went on, "So it's a real mystery what happened then but the good part is that whatever the reason, the Program in our school hasn't been all that terrible. Maybe it's because of better security for the kids, I don't know."

When Lynette mentioned "security," Liz scowled and shook her head with an angry expression. Liz and Mark began speaking simultaneously.

Liz said, "Yeah, kids' security—that needs improven," just as Mark began asking a question to Lynette, "Were you blokes in it...?"

"Oops," they both said, looked at each other, and Liz motioned for Lynette to answer Mark.

"Thank God, no. I hate the idea of having to do it and I hope to hold out another four weeks."

Mark looked puzzled. "Aren't there six or seven more school weeks? And you've got, erm, three more years to go to the end of sixth form?"

"Well, yeah. But starting in mid-June, Tom and I will be in a six-week summer program back in Germany and other countries on the continent. It's being run for some year tens at the end of their term at a school we're gonna transfer to. Our school is letting us go on the trip so we're finishing this term's work early. The last two weeks of school are for revision and exams anyway, and Tom and I both have good marks in our classes. And next year, the new school that we'll be going to doesn't have the Program. They told us they have a government exemption from running it."

"Huh," Mark said. "How can that happen?"

"Something to do with being an independent school, I heard," Lynette offered.

Liz broke in, "Well, ours is independent too but the soddin' governors agreed with the berks in the Department fer Education ter run it eya. It's 'cause the government wanted ter see 'oo it ood werk in a boarden sgool an' gave them a pot of wodja as a grant ter persued them."

*Liz broke in, "Well, ours is independent too but the sodding governors agreed with the berks in the Department for Education to run it here. It's because the government wanted to see how it would work in a boarding school and gave them a pot of money as a grant to persuade them."*

Tom was reluctant to get into the discussion since he didn't want to have to reveal anything of his own situation, but he offered, "We heard that our new school also is running a special government project in place of the Program and we were assured that there was no kids' nudity involved in that project."

Jess looked at him. "So you weren' in i' nei'her?"

Tom shook his head, looking down, and Lynette, sensing Tom's discomfort, jumped in to

change the topic and asked, "How is the Program different at your school? Like, you live there, so someone in it has to be naked all day *and* night too? Can people demand reasonable requests after school is over?"

Jess grinned. "Oi, nah. Nippers can dress af'er classes are over. Tha's a 'iny benefi'; 'he dawms are so close by 'ha' mos' nippers wind up comin' over starkers from 'he dawms so 'hey don' 'ave 'o do 'he public strippin' each day."

*Jess grinned. "Oi, no. Kids can dress after classes are over. That's a tiny benefit; the dorms are so close by that most kids wind up coming over naked from the dorms so they don't have to do the public stripping each day."*

Lynette recalled a comment Liz had made earlier. "Liz, you said something about improving security?"

"Oi, right," Liz said. "I'm proper leery of 'oo bad the safety is fer Program babboys eya. Ain't loike yaw sgool, frum what yaouw said. 'Un of me cousins was in the Program in 'er sgool in the Eus Midlands lus autumn. Rita's terribly shy; she's a lickle wench, just over foiv' foot, an' she's a year eleven. She got picked the well fust doy of sgool in the fust group. The babboys didn't knoo that the Program'd be starten in their sgool lus autumn so when a bunch of them was called, they didn't knoo what was up. When she was told that she 'ad ter strip off, she fainted. When she woke, she crack 'erself in the nurse's room, starkers. The nuss came in an' examined 'er, then told 'er she was okoy an' she 'ad ter goo ter 'er class—I fink it was the third period then."

*"Oi, right," Liz said. "I'm proper leery of how bad the safety is for Program kids here. Ain't like your school, from what you said. One of my cousins was in the Program in her school in the East Midlands last autumn. Rita's terribly shy; she's a little girl, just over five foot, and she's a year eleven. She got picked the very first day of school in the first group. The kids didn't know that the Program'd be starting in their school last autumn so when a bunch of them was called, they didn't know what was up. When she was told that she had to strip off, she fainted. When she woke, she found herself in the nurse's room, naked. The nurse came in and examined her, then told her she was okay and she had to go to her class—I think it was the third period then."*

"Rita told me she troid ter grab a sheet off the cot but the nuss bunted 'er ert into the hall where the classes were changen. Sum guys grabbed 'er an' began gropen an' maulen 'r an' she collapsed on the flower an' 'un picked 'er up an' held 'er whilst anover boy began fingeren 'er. The nuss came ert an' chased the boys away, an' even though me cousin was hysterical, the nuss sent 'er off ter 'er anunst class."

*"Rita told me she tried to grab a sheet off the cot but the nurse pushed her out into the hall where the classes were changing. Some guys grabbed her and began groping and mauling her and she collapsed on the floor and one picked her up and held her whilst another boy began fingering her. The nurse came out and chased the boys away, and even though my cousin was hysterical, the nurse sent her off to her next class."*

“Instead of going to class, Rita ran out of the building to hide somewhere and the equipment shed near the sports pitch wasn't locked, so she crawled in and hid under some sports gear and cried herself to sleep. A bit later, a boy getting football gear out of the shed noticed her there and called a teacher, who got the head teacher. He came out and brought her back into the school.”

*“Instead of going to class, Rita ran out of the building to hide somewhere and the equipment shed near the sports pitch wasn't locked, so she crawled in and hid under some sports gear and cried herself to sleep. A bit later, a boy getting football gear out of the shed noticed her there and called a teacher, who got the head teacher. He came out and brought her back into the school.”*

Tom interrupted. “Wait, translation, please? ‘Blarted’?”

“Cried!” a bunch of kids exclaimed.

“What about the ‘yed teacher’?” he asked, confused.

Sarah giggled. “That’s the head teacher.”

Tom shook his head doubtfully but motioned Liz to continue.

“She told me that she was just about panicking and was really messed up when the yed...” she grinned at Tom, “**HEAD!** teacher brought her to the classroom where she was supposed to be for that period, the last of the day. She was sat in the classroom all period and when it was over, she didn't chip—erm, Tom, that means, erm, ‘leave,’—so the teacher brought her to the office and the... **head** teacher let her sit there for a while before he told her that because of her unauthorized absence from classes, she'd have to spend two weeks in the Program. He told her that her clothes were set in a box outside the school and led her to the front door, sent her out, and locked up.

*“She told me that she was just about panicking and was really messed up when the yed...” She grinned at Tom, “**HEAD!** teacher brought her to the classroom where she was supposed to be for that period, the last of the day. She was sat in the classroom all period and when it was over, she didn't chip—erm, Tom, that means, erm, ‘leave,’—so the teacher brought her to the office and the... **head** teacher let her sit there for a while before he told her that because of her unauthorized absence from classes, she'd have to spend two weeks in the Program. He told her that her clothes were set in a box outside the school and led her to the front door, sent her out, and locked up.*

“Rita saw the clothes boxes but they were all empty. She tried the door but it was locked. She remembered that her rucksack was somewhere...”

*“Rita saw the clothes boxes but they were all empty. She tried the door but it was locked. She remembered that her rucksack was somewhere...”*

Sarah was watching Tom closely and saw his face was blank. “Liz, wait. Tom needs help. Tom, ‘clobber’ means, erm, ‘clothes’... Okay, Liz.”

“Erm... it was still in the sgool so she ran ter the back of the builden ter try other doors when she saw the HEAD teacher’s auto driven away; all the builden doors were locked an’ she was starkers outdoors, maybe fawer kilometers frum um. She thought of broken a windoo, but Rita’s not the kind of wench ter damage summat, so she troid ter fink of a woy ter get um wiouten naaa ‘un seen ‘er. She didn’t knoo that a tewthree boys ‘ad noticed the remainen box with clobber an’ figured they’d tek them an’ wetch ter see who turned up.

*“Erm... It was still in the school so she ran to the back of the building to try other doors when she saw the HEAD teacher’s auto driving away; all the building doors were locked and she was naked outdoors, maybe four kilometers from home. She thought of breaking a window, but Rita’s not the kind of girl to damage something, so she tried to think of a way to get home without no one seeing her. She didn’t know that a few boys had noticed the remaining box with clothes and figured they’d take them and watch to see who turned up.*

“When Rita crossed the field between the sgool an’ sum trees, she told me that fawer boys grabbed ‘er. They gang-raped ‘er an’ caggy ‘er in the field. When she didn’t shoo up at um, me aunt rang up the sgool, got naaa answer, so she rang the bobboys. Apparently they rang the... erm, *head* teacher ter find ert where Rita ‘ad miskin sin lus, an’ crack ert that ee ‘ad caggy ‘er bloody starkers an’ alone... oops, Mark?”

*“When Rita crossed the field between the school and some trees, she told me that four boys grabbed her. They gang-raped her and left her in the field. When she didn’t show up at home, my aunt rang up the school, got no answer, so she rang the bobbies. Apparently they rang the... erm, **head** teacher to find out where Rita had been seen last, and found out that he had left her naked and alone...”*

“Need to tell them what you said again, Liz,” Mark told her. “That last was ‘Apparently they rang the head teacher to find out where Rita had been seen last, and found out that he had left her bloody starkers and alone.’ Okay, go on.”

“Oi, I spek proper English! ...alone outside the sgool. They crack... erm, found... ‘er just before it got dark, unconscious, lyen cold on the ground. She spent a couple weeks in the hospital; she almost popped ‘er clogs...”

*...alone outside the school. They found her just before it got dark, unconscious, lying cold on the ground. She spent a couple weeks in the hospital; she almost died...”*

Liz noticed blank looks from both Lynette and Tom.

“Means ‘doid,’ mates—almost doid from cold exposure an’ still’s gotten major shrink therapy. Nothen happened ter the yed teacher an’ me aunt an’ uncle am tryen ter sue him an’ the sgool. They haven’t charged the rapists yet aither but lots of babboys figured who they was.”

*“Means ‘died,’ mates—almost died from cold exposure and still’s getting major shrink therapy. Nothing happened to the head teacher and my aunt and uncle are trying to sue him and the school. They haven’t charged the rapists yet either but lots of kids figured*

*who they was."*

Lynette shuddered. "Oh god, that's really terrible!"

"Aye," Jess scowled, "I 'eard ov a few o'her rapes 'appenin' in Program schools 'oo. Lo's ov 'eachers don' give a brass far'hin' faw us kids' safe'y."

*"Aye," Jess scowled. "I heard of a few other rapes happening in Program schools too. Lots of teachers don't give a brass farthing for us kids' safety."*

"Hasn't miskin that bad eya at Haileybury, though," Liz commented. "The teachers does wetch ert fer us when we're on the grounds before an' after sgool. Sum teachers liv'on campus; the'er am cottages an' a lickle apartment builden' fer staff an' the dorms yav teachers liven' on the flower with us too."

*"Hasn't been that bad here at Haileybury, though," Liz commented. "The teachers do watch out for us when we're on the grounds before and after school. Some teachers live on campus; there are cottages and a little apartment building for staff and the dorms have teachers living on the floor with us too."*

"Well, any of you get put in the Program yet?" Lynette asked.

"Yeah," Mark said. "When it started up in our school, the kids to be selected for it were the year tens through upper sixth form. We have year nines, here too, but they're in their own wing and with the Program going on, they pretty much stay in their area. They run a 'junior' version of the Program there. Sarah and I learned about that because we were unlucky enough to get picked in the second week of school. We had to help a bit with the nines—Sarah can tell what happened."

Sarah scowled and she took up their story.

"You need to hear what happened. It was our soddin' bad luck. The school had designed a kind of 'light' version of the Program for the year nines so they would get some first-hand sex-ed learning and a chance to be naked in small groups before they were made to participate in the school-wide Program. It was supposed to be a pre-Program experience, kinda making it easier for them when they would have to do the Program later in the year. So me and Mark wound up as guinea pigs in the first part of it; we wound up in it 'cause Mark had just asked me to be his partner.

"We had just done the naked stripoff—crikey, some of the girls in our group were hysterical! I wasn't in much better shape—I was shaking like a leaf. When I pushed my panties down, I almost fainted and Mark happened to be close and kind of caught me."

Sarah looked at him, smiled, took his hand, and then went on.

"He was really nervous too, so much that he was shaking too, but he whispered to me that he was damned if he was going to be a coward and asked me if I was okay, that I looked fantastic, and had nothing to be ashamed of.

"Then the Head told us they weren't officially assigning partners, but they were recommending

that we do join up with a partner; we could pick a boy or girl partner, whichever we wanted, our choice. Mark was still kinda holding me up and his naked skin on mine felt ace but I still felt weird—shaky too. When the Head mentioned partnering up with someone, Mark asked if he could be my partner. I kinda shrugged, I think, my head was still spinning. Then the teacher who was in charge of the Program spoke up and said they were doing that year nine sex-ed Program intro thing and she wanted two sets of boy-girl Program partners to be class models for them. She pointed to me and said, ‘I have one pair here, they just agreed to be partners; now who else?’ After some more talking—arm-twisting, actually—she got a second pair. We were told to come to her room for the third period and the other partners had to go there for the fourth period for a different year nine group. The classes we had to do the modeling thing for were just the two days—that day and the next, she told us.

“We nipped off to her room when the third period came and she took us to this classroom in the year nine wing. There were twelve kids, six boys and six girls, in the classroom, all sitting on gym mats around the room. They were all togged up in their school outfits and here we were, all starkers and blushing so hard we could have started a bloomin’ fire. We walked in and they all started yammerin’ and some girls actually shrieked.

“The Program teacher told us we had to listen to the classroom teacher and do what she said, and then left. The teacher—her name was Mrs Jones—quieted the class down and told them this was their introduction to what they would be doing next year when they were on the Program. There was a lot of groans then. Then she began talking and I’ll try to remember about it. Mark, if I miss something, stop me.”

“Okay, love,” Mark nodded.

Sarah began...

Mrs Jones began the class. “Last week we talked about what a girl and boy look like naked—I showed you that sex-ed film. Now it’s hands-on time. Mark and Sarah are year tens; they’re fifteen, almost sixteen, and were just chosen for the Program this morning. So here they are, a naked boy and girl for us to examine.”

The class tittered.

“Mark, please come here, we’ll do you first.”

Mark very reluctantly shuffled off to stand next to the teacher.

Mark interrupted Sarah, shaking his head in disgust. “Shit, I was so fuckin’ scared; had no idea what was gonna happen.”

Jones looked at Mark, up and down—mainly down, then at her class. “Class, meet Mark.” Then she grabbed his cock. “And now meet Mark’s penis; it’s called a penis, or even a prick, when it’s hanging down, all floppy like it is now. But...”

She moved it up and down, then bounced it in her hand, and finally took hold of it again, stroking it, rubbing its head, and gently kneading it under its head. It rapidly began to

harden.

“...but when it gets stiff, like it'll be in a few seconds, then it's called a dick or cock. See, it's getting longer and fatter now. Mark's cock looks like it's a little under five inches now; that's on the low side of average for a fifteen or sixteen year old.”

Mark yelled, “Sarah! What the fuck—you needed to repeat that? I was so bloody humiliated when Jones made that remark!”

Sarah grinned and stuck out her tongue. “Love, you're okay now, I think you grew an inch since then—anyway, you fill me up so nice. Jones was trying to embarrass you, didn't you see that?”

“Yeah,” Mark grumbled. “Really, though...”

“Can it. So back to what happened then,” Sarah went on.

Then Jones lifted Mark's willy so the class could see his bollocks underneath and told the class, “Under here, this is his scrotum, which contains his testicles. They're usually called balls—when you feel them, you'll know why.

“Now I want all the girls to queue up and pass by to feel Mark's cock and balls. Be very careful touching his balls, squeeze them *gently*, since they're sensitive. Any boys who want to join the queue may do so too, but I expect you boys know what cocks and balls feel like.”

There were a number of very embarrassed looks amongst the boys as they tried to look anywhere other than at the teacher. But the girls all rushed up, jostling for a good position in the queue.

Mark shot me an anguished look, which soon turned to one of extreme embarrassment as the girls started to take their turns fondling his cock and balls, giggling and whispering to each other as they did.

By the time the third or fourth girl took Mark's cock in her little hand, it had become iron hard, its head had swelled and turned purplish-blue, and now it twitched.

“Oooohh!” the girl exclaimed and jerked her hand away. “It moved! Cor, it's huge!”

Sarah winked at Mark. “See—the girls thought you were big!”

Mark just shook his head and motioned for her to go on with the story.

“I could never fit such a big thing in me down there,” she said doubtfully.

Jones smiled. “Phyllis, it would certainly fit. You'd stretch. Remember, a baby will come out of there, won't it.”

Several girls muttered quiet “Eeeewwws” at that comment as Phyllis moved away and the next girl took Mark's stiff willy in her hand. Now it had started leaking.

The girl noticed it; as she stroked him, some got on her hand. “Yuck.” She wiped it off.

“Mrs Jones, his thing is dripping! Is that his pee?”

“Janice, it’s not a ‘thing,’ it’s a cock, remember? No, that’s a lubricant which helps the boy put his cock into a girl’s fanny to have coitus—which means to fuck.”

“Eeewww,” now came from most of the girls in the class.

Jones glanced at Mark’s cock. “Mark is producing lots of the lubricant now, you can call it ‘pre-cum’ because it comes out before the boy’s ejaculation, or when the boy ‘cums.’ Girls, circle ‘round again because I want everyone to feel how slippery it is and to taste it too.”

Now most girls in the room squealed “Eeeeeewww!” and the rest wailed “Nooooo!”

“Now girls,” Jones scolded, “remember, everything in this lesson is mandatory. When it’s time for the Program, you’ll have to do even more than what we’re doing now, so get used to it, understand? Now, queue up; you don’t want to face the consequences!”

“How come the boys...” one girl started to say.

“They can come up too, but they have their own supply of precum that they can feel and taste. The boys will get something else to do very soon, don’t worry.” Jones said.

Now the boys began to look quite uncomfortable and began fidgeting on the mats.

The girls queued up, this time quite reluctantly, and started through again; the first two gingerly touched the precum and put their fingers to their lips, but Jones would have none of that.

“Sarah, I can use you; come here, please. Stroke and squeeze Mark’s cock, let’s get enough precum out for everyone to feel and taste.”

Then, using her finger, Jones swiped a blob up for each girl to lick off her finger. When all the girls finished, they got back to their mats. Most had a disgusted expression and some looked faintly ill. The teacher looked sharply at the group.

“Come on now, girls. Was that so bad? What did it taste like?”

One girl complained, “Ugh, a little sticky, salty too. But Miss, he pees from there!”

“That’s true, but precum is not urine. And even so, you should know that urine is sterile and getting a little in your mouth is completely harmless.”

Another round of “Eeeeeewww” sounded in the room.

At this point, Mark was wild-eyed with pent-up frustration and reached for his willy.

“No, Mark, you need to save it till later. Keep your hands away. Sarah, your turn now. Boys, make a queue.”

They were all lined up within five seconds but with a minimum of pushing or jostling.

Mrs Jones obviously ran a tight ship.

Jones told me, "Sarah, stand in front of the desk and clasp your hands behind your head. Good; thrust your chest out. More. Our boys will pass by and feel your breasts and nipples with their hands and mouths."

Mark interrupted. "No you don't, Sarah. You didn't tell all she said."

Sarah blushed. "Oops..."

Mark commented with an evil smile, "Righto... Payback's a bitch. Okay, here's what Jones said." He looked at the teens who had been listening raptly while they stared at Sarah and he grinned as he continued. "After Jones told her to stick her chest out, she said something like, 'Well, seems there's not a lot to work with here. Sarah, you're just an A cup, right? Well, stick them out as much as you can. See, boys, they're like little cones with pointy nipples on top. When Sarah gets older, her breasts will fill out and get rounder.'"

Sarah growled, "Damn, I told her I was a B cup. My titties are kinda average for the girls in my P.E. class—among the Program kids too. Jones was really humiliating me too. And when she said those boys could suck on my boobies, I nearly stroked out. I did pull away and hiss 'No!' at her but she pulled me back and snapped, 'You'll listen sharp, miss.' Anyway, this next part is hard for me to tell."

Mark shrugged. "I'll tell what happened then. Sarah was so embarrassed standing there that she was flaming red."

Sarah was stood there, right at the front of the desk, chest out, and the boys came by and each pawed at her tits and then sucked them. The second kid balked at sucking her, though.

"Miss, I don't want Jimmy's spit in my mouth!"

"Scott, all the girls licked Mark's precum. Do what you're told, now. Is that clear?"

"Yes'm," he answered meekly.

After the boys' queue moved through, Jones motioned them to remain in front of Sarah.

"It's more difficult to see a girl's external genitalia; in medical terms it's called the vulva or female pudendum; you boys and girls call it a 'fanny' or 'minge,' but those names really apply to the vagina. This part has lots of other slang names too. The girl's vagina, or cunt, is the internal part where the boy puts his cock to fuck her. Notice that I'm using the accepted Program terms for body parts and sexual acts; you should become familiar with them, but remember that most names aren't for use in polite speech. However, we want you to use them when you're with naked Program children. Now Sarah," she gestured at the desk. "Please get up on the desk with your legs spread toward the boys. Then use your fingers to spread your vulva lips apart."

Sarah blushed again. "I was *SO BLOODY HUMILIATED!* I wanted to crawl into a hole and pull

it in behind me.”

Mark went on.

Sarah held herself open and then Jones came over and pointed out Sarah's lips, clit, the hole where the pee comes out, and her fanny.

Jones bent for a closer look. “Oh—Sarah, spread yourself wide a little lower, that's right—yes, oh, you still have your hymen. Boys, come look, girls too; come close to see what Sarah's hymen looks like. Hmmm, let's see how tough it is. I want the boys and girls to feel inside your vagina. Soon I will need you two to demonstrate intercourse for the class. That means that I'll need to break your hymen to get over that part faster.”

She poked at it with her finger and Sarah shrieked in pain.

Sarah was red-faced. “She really pushed on it. That's when I jumped off the desk and yelled at her.”

Mark nodded. “Sarah was furious—she was bloody awesome, standing up for herself like that. Here's what happened then.”

Sarah yelled, “I'm a virgin! You can't make me do those things. The Program rules say that we don't have to allow penetration!”

Jones shook her head. “That only applies to Reasonable Requests. For classroom demos, the teacher can go much further.”

“No way, I'm not bloody doing anything like that. Mark, tell her you won't let her do that to me.”

Mark told the group, “That's when I took Sarah's hand, pulled her around the desk, and started to lead her out of the room. The kids in the class were openmouthed with shock. Then Jones seemed to relent.”

He went on.

...Because she put up her hand and said, “Please wait, Sarah and Mark. I do think that teachers can require Program participants to do those things, but I'll talk to the coordinator and the head teacher first and get it sorted. Meanwhile, can we finish today's lesson? Please come back.”

Sarah reluctantly returned to the front of the room and, when Jones motioned to her, got on the desk again, looking at Jones warily.

“Now children,” Jones said, “everyone queue up now and we'll all take a turn at touching Sarah's external parts. Touch her gently. Make sure you find her clitoris and see what it feels like to touch. This is for both boys and girls to do. Now let's...”

Sarah interrupted. “Wait! Not with unwashed hands! I could get an infection. And don't push on my cherry; it hurts!”

“Goodness, Sarah. Point taken. Okay, children, use the sink back there. Wash with soap and hot water. Don't just wave your hands under the water. Then return here without soiling your hands and we'll begin.”

Each class member took a turn at stroking Sarah's um... vulva, but because she was so anxious, she was dry and by the eighth child's inspection, the stroking was getting painful. She complained it was hurting her, and Jones looked at me.

“Mark, I want you to wet your fingers and rub her; try to stimulate her sexually so the rest of the class can have their turn.” I started for the sink the kids used. “Wait, I have some hand cleaner.” She gave me the bottle and I rubbed a blob of it on my hands. “It has alcohol in it so be sure to get your hands dried completely. Then use your saliva for lubrication,” she told me.

I wet my fingers in my mouth before carefully circling her clit with gentle strokes. After a minute, Sarah began pulling at my arm.

“Oowww... Mark, no, it's still so sore...” she complained.

“Sorry, Sarah. Miss... Can I lick her? Is that all right, Sarah?”

“Uh... yeah... anything. I'm kinda sore but it feels tingly there...”

I leaned down and lapped up the length of Sarah's vulva, ending at her clit, and she bucked. Then I began to worm my tongue around her clit.

Sarah broke in, “I jerked 'cause this hot flash surged through me. I felt little shocks jolting my fanny. I hadn't twigged that the stroking that the kids had done earlier had actually started to turn me on; now Mark's licking was really stoking my lust. I moaned and grabbed my breasts, squeezing them and rolling my nipples with my thumbs and forefingers. My body began tensing; I must have been flushed from my tits down to my fanny. I gasped as Mark's tongue lashed all around my clit and I felt a warmth flowing down my belly; I could feel the juices seeping out of my fanny. Mark moved his tongue down and tickled my opening, lapping up my juices, and then returned to my clit.

“Shit, I had never felt this strong a sensation before; the tension in my body was winding me up faster than I'd thought possible. I felt my hips arching up off the desk as I tried to prolong the sheer pleasure as it rose higher and higher. Then it felt like Mark kinda pursed his lips around my button and sucked on it and nipped it with his teeth and I totally lost control; I shoved my hips up into his face whilst clutching the edges of the desk. Then, it was like a steel spring snapping, the pressure broke and I was overcome with one long orgasmic wave after another as I cried out, my pleasure was so incredible.

“Mark continued to gently stroke my slit as I relaxed. As my breathing began to return to normal, I could hear sighs, moans, and gasps around me. I turned my head to look. These twelve young kids were gathered all around me, looking at me with awe and frankly, a lot of lust. Most looked like they were on the verge of cumming; some girls had their hands under their skirts and some

boys' hands were inside their pants.”

Mark grinned. “Yeah, she had a friggin’ major cum. Let me tell what happened next.”

Jones hurriedly organized the children who had not had a chance to stroke Sarah’s slit, and they reverently did so, feeling how slippery Sarah’s juices had lubricated the area. Sarah was hardly aware of their stroking, however, as she had grabbed me and was snogging me frantically.

“Bloody fuckin’ awesome, Mark,” she breathed into my mouth. “Thank-you-thank-you-thank-you!”

Jones looked at us then. “Impressive performance. Oh, it’s almost time. Thank you for helping our class today, children. Class, thank Sarah and Mark for a fine lesson today.”

The room erupted with applause and cheers.

“We took longer than I expected today so next time, tomorrow, we’ll catch up. You may go now, and please remember, be back for third period tomorrow.”

After they left the room, I groaned to Sarah. “Shit... I’m sufferin’ here. Hard as a rock—I never got off!”

“Poor boy, I owe you. I’ll do your relief in our next class.” And she did, giving me an ace hand job.

## Chapter 10

“Goddamn, you two,” Tom said. “What a story—what a domineering teacher too. Did you go back the next day?”

Mark nodded. “Yeah, kinda reluctantly, actually. We found out that the second pair of kids, the partners who had to do that other year nine sex-ed class in the fourth period—it was with a different teacher—had a bad time of it. Well, bad for the girl. It happened when the teacher in their class came to the same part where Jones was showing Sarah’s fanny to the class and then mentioned that her hymen would need to be busted.”

Sarah broke in. “Yeah, and that’s when I jumped up off the desk—when I heard that—and said I was done. But during lunch, we ran into that other girl and her partner. She told us that she was a virgin like me and that the teacher in her group didn’t say anything about what he planned to do with them, you know, like Jones had said she wanted the two of us to fuck and that she wanted her class to stick their fingers in my fanny. At least I had lots of forewarning so I could stop her! That girl was crying when she told me what that teacher did to her. When he showed the year nine class her fanny and noticed that she still had her cherry, he just got everyone in his class to queue up and go and feel her; he told them to feel her cherry too—saying that it was a rare opportunity, and whilst they were doing that, he grabbed a dildo from somewhere.

“When those kids were done feeling her fanny, he got between her legs and told her to take a deep breath. She told me that she looked at him, like, why? She didn’t see him holding the dildo so had no warning about what happened next. He just shoved the thing right in, just wham, like that, and she screeched in pain and tried to jump up but he held her down, keeping the thing in her fanny until her bleeding stopped.”

“Oh god,” Lynette exclaimed. “Was she hurt bad?”

Tom broke in, “I think that doing that was actually a rape, you know.”

Sarah nodded vigorously. “Yeah, I’ll tell you more about that in a bit. But let me tell you what that teacher did to her after he did that; he had all the kids parade through, sticking their fingers inside her fanny, you know, feeling for her g-spot and stuff. No one washed their hands either.” Sarah shuddered.

Mark nodded. “It sounded awful. Those two kids had just come from that classroom. She had a wad of paper towels stuffed between her legs ‘cause the fingering made her bleeding start up again. So Sarah took her to the nurse.”

Sarah continued. “The nurse put some stuff on her torn areas and had her wear a belt and pad for the rest of the day. I think the girl was even more humiliated at that ‘cause they didn’t even let her wear panties. She didn’t go back to that class the next day either and we heard she told her parents what happened as soon as she was able to get her mobile to ring them; they came to the school and raised a huge ruckus and the word is that the teacher who did that got suspended. We couldn’t find out anything about what happened after that, though. She’s not in our school anymore.

“Anyway, right after I got done helping that girl, I got my mobile and rang my mum and told her what happened to me and that other girl, that they wanted to break my hymen and make me fuck in front of a class. Mum almost lost the plot at hearing that and told me she’s ringing the school’s governors. Then I marched right down to the Program teacher’s room with Mark and complained to her about what happened to that girl and about how Jones told me that I’d be forced to have my cherry busted like what happened to that girl. Mark told the teacher that we wouldn’t go to that class again unless the head teacher guaranteed that I wouldn’t get hurt in any way!”

Mark grinned. “Sarah was really all set to argue it out, ‘cause that’s when she pulled out the Program book to read out that part about being hurt.”

“Yeah,” Sarah said. “I found the section; it said no intercourse or physical harm could be forced and tearing a hymen is definitely harm. Otherwise it wouldn’t hurt—or bleed! And the teacher thought about it for a few moments and then agreed with me. I made her write out a note for me to give to Jones, too, saying ‘no penetration allowed’ in case Jones wouldn’t change her mind, and Mark told her that unless the Head also sent Jones a note saying the same thing, we would not stay in that classroom with her.”

Mark nodded. “So unlike that other couple, we did go back. Sarah, want to tell about the Tuesday session?”

“Okay,” she said, “yeah, and we were a bit surprised when we arrived ‘cause everyone in the class was just wearing their P.E. kits but with no trainers. And shit, Jones didn’t waste any time getting started, either!”

Jones began the class by welcoming me and Mark. “I know, no penetration today,” she whispered to me and showed me the Head’s note, and I nodded. Then Jones looked up. “Class, yesterday we covered a boy’s and girl’s sexual anatomy and today we’ll be doing sexual response. I want the girls to come up and stand in a row in front of me here and Mark, please stand here, right in front of them. We didn’t get a chance to see a boy’s ejaculation yesterday, so let’s start with that right now. Now Sarah, come jack him off.”

Holding Mark’s cock felt the same as the day before, but I still wasn’t used to doing hand-jobs; this would only be my third time. So I bent down and tentatively wrapped my hand around him and began stroking and shit, his cock jerked and suddenly it was all the way up. So fast! Mark kinda spread his legs a little wider to give me room to reach his balls. I friggin’ love his cock, it’s so smooth and curves upward just right, it’s graceful. Anyway, the head quickly started darkening from the extra blood going to it and I felt it kinda swell. Then the head grew shiny and Mark grunted as a shot of cum spurted out.

It surprised me at how fast it was shooting and I jerked his cock up and the cum flew right out at the girls as they tried to scramble away but Mark let a few more shots go; glob after friggin’ glob of cum shot outta his cock. It was goin’ like a bloomin’ hose, spraying all of the girls. Maybe four of them got cum on their shorts and legs. Fuck, were they wailing at that! You’d think it burnt ‘em or somethin’. Shit, Mark was spent ‘cause he staggered back to lean against the desk. He was flushed and breathing hard. A few last drops of cum

oozed out from the tip of his cock as it softened; they fell and went splat on the floor.

Jones looked at the girls who were milling around, hands flapping at their shorts, not knowing what to do.

“Girls, come here,” she commanded. “It’s just semen or cum. You need to learn what a boy’s cum tastes like. Scoop it off your leg or shorts and put it in your mouth.”

They all groaned, “Eeewww!”

“Do it! If you didn’t get any on yourself, get some from Phyllis or Janice.”

Very tentatively and reluctantly, the girls did so, some screwing up their faces at the taste, others looked thoughtful.

“Well. We do have a bunch of messy girls now,” Jones observed. “You can’t wear those spermy shorts, it’ll smear on everything they touch, won’t it, so I want you to take them off—in fact, I want everyone—all of you—get your kits and undies off now. We’ll do the rest of the class with you all starkers.”

There was a howl of “Nooo!” from everyone but Jones looked at them stonily. “Children, remember, you’re all in the Program! If you don’t undress, then you will spend the rest of this week going to *ALL* of your classes bollocks-naked! Now, no more delay, strip off!”

A tearful group of boys and girls began disrobing and most were soon were standing around, blushing and some teary-eyed. Three—two boys and a girl—didn’t get fully undressed.

Jones looked at them with a hard expression. “No stalling, now! You three, off with your knickers right now!”

Sniffing and blushing, the three kids slowly dropped their knickers and looked like they wanted to shrink into the ground. Several of the boys sported cute little hardons, and a number of the kids, both boys and girls, began furtively checking out their classmates. Four of the girls had small, conical breasts. One girl’s breasts were mostly areola and nipple but the sixth had breasts which were actually slightly larger than mine and most of the other kids looked at her wonderingly. Neither of the two flaccid boys’ cocks were larger than about two inches whilst the two who had rigid erections had less than five inches. The children took in these sights as they tried not to appear like they were even looking.

Jones called them to attention. “Boys and girls, I want you to stand in a row in front of the desk, alternating by sex. We’ll be learning about oral sex now and everyone will do what I say, won’t you. Refuse to take part and you’ll spend the week starkers and worse too. Sarah, please, get on the desk like yesterday.”

I looked at Jones and whispered, “No penetration?” and she nodded. So I slid my arse onto the cold top and leant back down on my elbows.

“Open your legs wide, Sarah, and I want Mark to show what he did for you yesterday. Children, Mark will demonstrate cunnilingus for us, that’s fanny-licking, or just ‘eating out’ or ‘going down,’ on Sarah. Watch carefully now.”

“Ohmygod!” Sarah told the group. “Mark’s got a magic tongue. In about ten seconds flat, he had me gasping. But she didn’t let him get me off. She stopped him just as it was feelin’ real good.”

“That’s enough, Mark. Now class, keep your place in the queue—Scott, you start; come here and each of you will eat out Sarah’s fanny.”

Squeals of dissent rang out... “She pees from there” ... “I’m not a lezzie” ... “That’s filthy” ... “Yukk, I can’t do it...”

“All right,” Jones ordered, looking very cross. “Everyone who refuses, leaves this class now, leaves here still starkers, and goes to the office with a note saying they are to remain bollocks-starkers till Friday. Who is still refusing?” The room was instantly quiet. “Good. Now Scott, begin.”

He approached me bashfully. “Sarah?” He whispered. “I’m scared...”

Awww, I felt my insides melt. He was so fuckin’ cute, too, all pink and smooth and hairless, with this lovely little dick standing up like a saluting soldier under his cute rounded tummy. His dick was so hard I couldn’t even tell if it was cut or not.

“It’s okay, sweetie. Just lick me right at the top of my slit here. That’s where the girl feels it best.” I put my forefinger on my clit hood to show him, and he tentatively lowered his head and touched me with the tip of his tongue.

“Ahhh,” he murmured, slightly muffled, “this smells sooo... ooohh... sexy!” Then he began lapping.

I squirmed as sparks flew. That was so fuckin’ ace! “Aaahh, Scott, that’s brill!”

He went “Mmmmm...”

Then Jones stopped him. I could kill her! “Next! Janice.”

Janice bent down between my legs. She was the girl whose titties were all puffy nipples. She had no pubic hair but had an awesome bubble butt. She muttered, “I’m NOT a lezzie, Sarah...” as she began licking.

“I know, Janice, this is just the Program... OOHOOH! God! Wow!”

Jones called the next kid, a boy, and Janice raised up with a smirk on her face. “Good, huh?”

“Damn right!” I told her.

“The rest of the kids had a go at me and I came twice and was kinda out of it for a minute after they were done, so I didn’t hear what Jones told Mark next.”

Mark nodded. "Yeah, I can continue. After Sarah's hand-job and seeing those girls licking up my cum, my mind was bloody trashed. All those young girls—hell, they were only a year younger than us—but they looked so—like little kids. What a fuckin' turn-on, seeing them naked too. I'm not gay or anything, but those boys looked kinda cute too, all smooth and hairless. Anyway, I was as limp as a wet sock. Even after watching Sarah being eaten to two awesome cums. That's when they finished with her and she was so out of it. Then Jones had them stand in that lineup again. It was funny to see the wet faces on some of them and the boys—that row of boners they were all sportin'—that looked so bloomin' crazy, all those little boners lined up in a row like that." He continued.

Jones smiled at the group. "All right now, children, that wasn't so bad, right? Seems like all of you had fun too, isn't that so?" All of the boys nodded whilst the girls blushed and tried to look disinterested. "That's good, because now we get to go to the next level and this will be intense for some of you. Mark? You're looking pretty floppy. Can you get it up again?"

Everyone, especially the boys, looked worried now.

I could feel some faint stirrings and twitching, but twice in less than a half hour? Well, maybe. So I answered, "Maybe... but not without help."

Jones grinned. "That's the plan, actually. You'll get lots of that. Class, our next topic is called fellatio, or giving a blow-job. There's no blowing involved—it's mostly licking and sucking. Ah, welcome to the world, Sarah." She had just sat up. "We need you to show the children how to give a blow-job."

Sarah blushed. "I hadn't done that yet. For that Monday, except for Jones' class and the relief session in the fourth period where I treated Mark to a hand-job, Mark and I didn't have much sexual contact with anyone, even for reasonable requests, but we did see people giving blow-jobs for relief sessions the first Program week. So I had a basic idea of what was expected. But I wasn't terribly enthused at the idea. Actually, I thought it was bloody repugnant. And whilst the girls here had already tasted precum and cum, I hadn't. So I told her I was completely inexperienced."

"Miss, I've never done that before," I said, screwing up my face.

"Really? Hmmm... well, it's not difficult to learn. Surely you've seen it done, however?"

"Yes'm. Just twice from across the room. But it's..."

"It's a natural expression of sexuality and gives pleasure to both participants. Okay, just kneel in front of Mark and take his penis—remember, class? When it's floppy like now, it's a penis? Now lick it, on the head, up and down the sides, like a lollipop or ice cream stick. When you put it in your mouth, watch that you don't scrape it with your teeth..."

Sarah looked at the group of teens and grinned. "I don't need to tell you how she talked me through my first attempt at giving a blow-job, I'm sure. But the next part that happened was just

wild and you'll see why."

Jones finished the lightning b-j course in two minutes and I saw that Mark had a little chubby going; there *was* a bit of life in there, it seemed.

Mark huffed. "Damn, Sarah, I just blowed my brains out only a few minutes earlier!"

"Well, let's see if the class can pump him up," Jones declared and looked at the kids. Now the boys looked distinctly anxious. "Okay, girls, beginning with Susan on the right, I want you to give Mark's cock a blow-job, doing the things you saw Sarah doing. Each of you will lick it and then suck it. Make sure to use your tongue and remember that the most sensitive part is under the crown. Everyone will get two minutes; then make way for the next one's turn."

"Ummm, Miss... He's not going... to... come, is he?" one girl asked fearfully.

"Hopefully, at some point he will and I want it to be when one of you children is sucking on him. When that happens, I think I'll give that person extra points for participation. But if I think any of you are slugging off and not being enthusiastic in your work, remember, the nudity penalty for the rest of the week is still an option," she warned. "Okay, Susan, you're first. Mark, spread your legs a bit; you'll be getting some extra help in keeping hard."

While Susan fearfully began tentatively licking Mark's cock, Jones whispered in my ear, "Kneel down behind Mark and reach between his legs. I want you to fondle his balls and tickle his bumhole—wet your finger for that—whilst the children are sucking on his cock."

"Sorry? I'm to what?" I asked.

"You heard me, miss. Fondle his balls and run a wet finger over his bumhole. Now!"

"Damn," I thought. "Eeewwww, myself. Well, fuck it; who knows what kinda soddin' reasonable requests I'll be forced to do this week. Might as well get used to makin' myself do bloody unpleasant stuff..." So I got into position and reached up, then tickled Mark's scrotum.

He hissed, "Ssssss...woooo, frikin' brill, Sarah..."

From what I could see as Mark's cock slid out of Susan's mouth, he had some definite plumpness going on now. I wet my pointer finger and poked it between his arse cheeks, feeling for the hole. When I touched it, he shuddered and groaned, so I started diddling it.

"Oompf!" Mark gasped and drove his hips into Susan's face, making her gag. He was just about fully erect now.

"Susan, time," Jones called. "Ryan, you're up!"

All the boys gasped and the girls smirked.

“Oh, no!” he moaned, “I... rather go naked... I think...”

“Have you forgotten the school assemblies for Friday mornings, then?” Jones asked sweetly. “They’ll feature displaying the Program students who’ve had infractions. Not only will children who had infractions get to spend additional time being naked for the following week, those offenders will get to be on display on stage where anyone in the school can come up and grope him or her however they want—excepting no penetrations are allowed. So... are you still refusing?”

“Fuck...” Ryan muttered and slunk to his spot in front of Mark and knelt. He was shaking and his little cock had gone limp.

Mark looked startled. His expression was priceless. He looked like he was thinking, “A bloke? Giving me a b-j? What the fuck?”

“Class, listen,” Jones called. “The Program is supposed to broaden your sexual horizons and experiences. I’m well aware that most boys will never attempt to give a blow-job and believe absolutely, without any doubt, that any boy who does must be queer, a poofster, shirtlifter, gay. These boys grow up to develop homophobic attitudes because they have no experience with knowing what it’s like when one shares sexual pleasure with others of the same sex. What you boys will learn in this class has nothing to do with your being gay, it’s about sharing pleasurable sexual experiences, both for the giver and receiver. If you find that don’t like it, that’s fine. If you do, then you’ve learned something important about yourself that you’d never otherwise learn.”

I saw Ryan staring at Mark’s cock. His own little cock was now completely limp. Mark’s had lost a little stiffness during Jones’ lecture. Jones took hold of it and moved it toward Ryan’s mouth, wiggled it a little, then waited.

“Ryan...” Jones intoned warningly.

He sighed and took the cock, flinching a little, and slowly touched his tongue to it.

“I want a lot more enthusiasm, young man,” Jones said sternly.

He closed his eyes, opened his mouth, and plunged it over Mark’s cock. Then he began to carefully bob his head up and down, trying to touch his lips to the skin as little as he possibly could, whilst he used just two fingers to stroke it. Mark kept getting softer.

“Suck on it, Ryan,” Jones instructed. “Fasten your lips around it. Do to Mark what you’d like to be done to your own little cocklet.”

“Ugh!” Lynette interjected. “I gotta interrupt, Sarah, even though your story is riveting. This teacher, Jones, is really bad news for those young kids. She’s really tearing down their self-esteem by using all those belittling descriptions. ‘Cocklet’ for that Ryan boy? And when you began, you told us how she humiliated you and Mark about your boob and cock sizes? Isn’t all that opposed to what the Program is supposed to do? I heard it was to make kids confident in their bodies, so how does humiliation help them? Jeez, Sarah!”

Mark was nodding while Lynette was talking. "Right. Well said," he said. "Jones wasn't the only teacher who did that rot—us and some other kids complained about it. We think someone must have listened to our complaints 'cause most of the humiliation from teachers began to stop after another week or two."

"Yeah, it did," Sarah agreed. "And if you can believe it, Jones wasn't the worst teacher, either, at the beginning. I told you about the other one, the cherry-buster; apparently he was the worst, what we heard. Some of the P.E. teachers were known for some humiliating rot too. Okay then. Let me tell what came next."

So Ryan gave in to Jones' insisting; he sighed and began to suck, running his lips firmly up and down the shaft. His two minutes were soon up and when Jones called time, he gratefully let go and leant back. Mark was only at half-mast now. That BJ and my stroking his balls and arsehole and all that hadn't done much.

"Come now, Mark, you didn't find that arousing?" Jones asked him.

"Um, no, Miss. He was enthusiastic enough..." Ryan shot him a grateful look, "...but I guess, I don't know, maybe I don't really fancy boys."

There was some sniggering at that comment.

"All right. You other boys, now I don't want you to think that you're gay or that *we* think it either, but if you want to try to get Mark hard again, then if you do, I'll credit you with extra participation points. Any takers?"

I was amazed when Scott raised his hand. Cute little Scott.

Two of the girls scowled. "Turn jumper," one muttered. Hmmm, I thought. They were gaggin' for a chance on Mark's cock; interesting.

Jones motioned him forward. He sunk to his knees and took Mark's cock in his hand, then examined it, looking at it closely, all over. Say, I never mentioned that Mark is cut and the ridge of his crown is very prominent so the end of his cock looks like a helmet. It looks awesome. I love his cock. Anyway, apparently so did Scott, because he began to really make love to it, and I mean LOVE. He worked it in and out of his mouth, sucked and licked it, tongued it all over—even licked Mark's balls! Then he began wanking him, running a hand up and down the shaft, whilst he kept the crown in his mouth and the way Mark was groaning, I took as read he was tonguing the head. Two minutes passed quick and Scott's time was called. Mark was rigid and throbbing with his heartbeat.

Jones was grinning. "Scott, brilliant job. Ten points for you. Mark, fancy boys now?"

Mark was trembling. "Shi... umpf... sorry... he was incredible; thanks, Scott, you really knew what you were doing. Miss, I just closed my eyes and went with the sensations. I just forgot that the mouth on my dick had a cock attached to the same body."

Most kids in the class giggled at that.

Scott looked at Jones shyly. "Miss, I hope you don't think..."

"Young man, I don't think anything other than the fact that you did an outstanding job."

He blushed. "I just did what you said, what I thought would make me feel good. That was the first time ever for me."

Now a few girls began to look at Scott with awe. When he got back to his spot in the queue, I heard one ask, "You're ace with your tongue, Scott! Please, ask me for a date!" Another hissed, "Me too!"

Scott's expression looked like he had won the jackpot. I think he did too. Heh. Cute Scott now had one girl on each side of him, each holding onto an arm, and his cute cock was all stiff and purple and throbbing too while those girls petted it. Meanwhile, without any attention, Mark's cock had begun flagging, but another girl began working on it and his cock was soon standing straight out again. The girl who was sucking him giggled and made a face, then pulled off; a long thin strand of precum stretched from her lips to his cockhead.

"Cor..." she muttered, "this is the dog's bollocks," and the class laughed.

"More than bollocks," Jones chuckled. "It's great fun too. Time. Next."

Soon everyone in the class had gotten a go at Mark's cock, including the other four boys, none of whom matched Scott's prowess. They had performed awkward but adequate, if somewhat mechanical jobs, which Mark endured by shutting his eyes and probably tried to replay in his mind what Scott had done.

With the last person, Jones announced, "Mark's still hard and I'm sure very needy now, right?" Mark nodded urgently. "Sometime during the next round, he'll cum, but now it's optional if you want to take part. If he cums *in your mouth*, then extra points to you. If you swallow his cum, I'll award more points. And for this part I'll need three or more children to volunteer. If not, I'll do a random drawing to get three. And yes, boys are included. Who wants to try?"

Three girls raised their hands and then, after several girls prodded him and whispered in his ear, Scott did too, wearing a sheepish grin. Hmmm, wonder what they told him... Then Jones whispered to me to really give Mark's dangly bits and arse a workout. Jones took a sheet and wrote numbers one through four on it, tore it in quarters, put the pieces face down on the desk, and slid them around.

"Pick one," she told them. "That's the order you'll go." Scott got number one.

He did a valiant job and after two minutes, Mark was groaning and shuddering; he was breathing hard and his cock was pulsing. I had been tickling his balls and arsehole too, and I could feel it pull in as Mark pushed his pelvis into Scott's face. I noticed the kids watching—they seemed lost in their own worlds, masturbating themselves gently as they watched the action taking place in front of them. Then it was Janice's turn and she picked

up where Scott left off, but while vigorous, her sucking wasn't as inspired as Scott's. However, Mark was in a bad way now, panting with unfulfilled lust. Then Celeste's turn came.

She began slowly, not like Janice did, with a frantic sucking action. She did what Scott had done, making love to Mark's cock, trailing sinuous kisses up and down the shaft's length as the head turned shiny and the whole organ began to twitch. That's when she opened her mouth and plunged her head down, gagged slightly, made a gulping, gurgling sound, and her lips came to rest against Mark's groin, at his cock's root! She had taken him in all the way! Ohmygod! Then I could hear her tongue working in her mouth and could see her throat muscles clamping.

With a giant roar, Mark erupted, his arse cheeks clenching and pelvis thrusting hard into Celeste's face as she pulled back to catch a breath and her mouth opened. I saw a jet of cum lance out into her open mouth and she choked slightly, then gulped, as another jet coated her lips and nose. Then she plunged her mouth down on the cock again and, since I was still holding Mark's balls, I could feel him pulse three more times, delivering more creamy cum into her mouth. Her face looked like she was enraptured—incredible, did she cum from giving a blow-job? Then I noticed that one of her hands was in her crotch and she was fingering herself. Okay... whatever.

Mark slumped back to the desk and I had to twist and scrunch myself out of his way so he wouldn't trip over me. He was huffing and panting like one of those ancient steam locomotives you see in classic movies. But his cock was still erect! Mostly. Number four was Audrey, who looked hugely disappointed, but Jones pointed to her and then to Mark's cock. She got the idea and gently began to wash it with her tongue and lips, and was rewarded by several jerky aftershocks as Mark's cock oozed a small quantity of cum, which she licked up.

Jones looked absolutely delighted. "That was brilliant," she cheered. "Fifteen points to Celeste. That was a 'deep-throat' you did, Celeste. How did you know how to do that?"

"Um, Miss, my big sis has a boyfriend and um... she told me to keep the boys happy, they like cocksucking and the deeper the better. She has this dildo thingie and taught me how and I've practiced on it."

"Well, it certainly showed, my dear. Well done. Now class, for the next part, remember the pairings you all agreed to for this class?"

I guess I looked confused and so did Mark. We had been looking at the class and noticed that they seemed more used to being naked together, a couple of the boys were each holding a girl, gently petting them. Erections were on display; all the boys were again sporting one.

She told us, "For this class, we asked each boy and girl to select someone who they would pair up with to support, kind of like you do in the upper years in the Program." Turning to

them, she continued, "For the rest of the class, we'll be doing another exploratory activity, one I hope you'll enjoy and which our lessons yesterday and today prepared you for. Mark and Sarah will help you for this activity by demonstrating. Join your partners, each pair on a mat." She turned to me and whispered, "Judging by your lack of blow-job experience, I assume you're not familiar with the soixante-neuf, or sixty-nine foreplay."

I looked at Mark. "I know what it is."

"So do I, Miss," he said. "I saw some kids doing it in the lunchroom last week."

"So can you demonstrate the position, girl on top?" We looked at each other and the two of us nodded. She turned to the class; everyone was seated on a mat. "Sarah and Mark will join you on a mat; watch how they set themselves."

We took a vacant mat and Mark got on his back. His willie looked totally out of action; it just flopped off to the side.

"Okay boys, lay down like Mark." They did, and six erections pointed ceilingward. Jones nodded at me, so I crawled over Mark's chest, swivelled and stretched a leg over his face, and came to rest with my thighs on each side of his head. Damn, I felt so bloomin' exposed!

"Girls, get into the same position, get there however you want."

There was a faint amount of murmuring, complaining sounds, but Jones had the class pretty much obeying whatever she asked for now.

When everyone was settled, she continued, "This is one of the possible soixante-neuf, or sixty-nine, positions. There's another where the partners lie on their sides, and you should be able to imagine other creative possibilities, even standing up, can't you. Think of how the number 69 looks when written out. The partners are face to genitals. Now girls, lean down and suck your partners' cocks and boys, lick your partners' fannies. Remember, this is all about learning to please your partner. Make them feel good and they will make you feel good."

I was surprised not to hear any complaints now, only the moist sounds of licking and slurping, interspersed with sighs and moans and punctuated with little squeals as someone did something unexpected. Mark was lapping at my fanny and it felt wonderful, such a warm and fulfilled sensation that flooded my consciousness. His cock, however, was stone cold dead, and even with my being able to get it totally crammed into my mouth—holy fuck, I'm deep-throating—no, not really—I felt no response at all from it. But Mark licked me to this gentle rolling orgasm that flooded me with caring feelings for the lunk. What a change from when he caught me from falling—was that just a day ago? Crikey!

Then we began to hear the sounds of the youngsters in the room reaching their own orgasms, so we sat up and watched, as most of the girls actually took their partner's cum

in their mouths; only one pulled away and got splashed on her face and neck. A few of the girls must have cum too, but the two who didn't demanded that their partners finish the job—which they did, with more than a little assistance from the girl. And after Jones summarized what the kids learned—we did too!—she thanked us and sent us off, back to the real world of the normal Program chaos taking place in our classes and halls.

Lynette was red-faced and Tom looked like he had been pole-axed. Lynette sighed, “What a damned crazy story, Sarah! I don't know how you had the courage to do all that. I would have died...”

“Mark was my rock; he gave me the courage. I guess I can see how having a partner's support is so important. If I had to do that alone, I would have never made it past the first ten minutes. Since we did those year nine sessions, we've seen a lot of regular class Program demos and let me tell you, our sessions with the nines were bloody more intense. Maybe things will change with the Program, though. There's been stuff in the newspapers about possible changes coming to it...”

“Say, what happened after your mom spoke to the school governor?” Lynette asked.

“All she told me was that the governor seemed angry to hear what had happened,” Sarah told her, “but during the next few days, that's when we began seeing that the teachers were getting better in treating the Program kids. We think that the governors didn't know how horrid some teachers were, so maybe Mum's talking about what happened helped.”

The other teens in the group nodded their agreement at Sarah.

Lynette glanced at Tom and saw that his complexion was looking almost green-gray.

“Hey,” she said, looking at her watch, “Tom and I still have an almost two-hour ride to go! It's been brill meeting you guys and talking—let's all keep in touch. Sarah, here's my mobile; call yours with it so we can share numbers. Then we can all share our news.”

After Lynette got her phone back, she and Tom packed up their ground cloth, waved farewell, and set out.

As they rode off, Lynette called to Tom, “Hey, you okay? You were kinda fading there. Was it panic starting?”

“No, sweetie,” Tom answered, “just started feeling anxious and... um... overwhelmed, I guess, visualizing a whole naked class and those two kids, kids just like us... ah... demonstrating? no, performing? um... like giving a show or something?... doing sex acts with them. Sarah and Mark—they're kinda just like us, just normal kids. I began seeing you and me in their place, being made to do that... aargh! That's when I began to get bad feelings.”

“But... you better now?”

“Getting there. Bike riding—the ol' muscles pumping—helps chase away bad thoughts. And remember, I'm gonna work out with Andrew after we get back; that'll help too.”

## Chapter 11

While Tom and Andrew were out doing their workouts, Angela came to Lynette's room.

"Honey, are you set with the clothing and shoes you'll need for Europe? You'll have lots of walking, you know, and you'll need a nice outfit or two for going to concerts. Let's check out what you plan to take."

While the two were discussing the clothes Lynette would take, Angela decided to mention her concerns about what she'd been noticing regarding Tom's and Lynette's behavior together.

"Lynette, honey, I've noticed that you and Tom have become much closer during the past few months—Dad and I both have seen how you behave around each other. You were always close, but now, the way you look at each other and the way you're always brushing against each other, kissing, or even just holding hands, we can tell that something seems changed."

Lynette blushed shyly. "Well... um... well, you know how Tom and I run together and bike together too. He... um, we do almost everything together, study too."

"Yes, I know that you spend a lot of time with Tom... you rarely see any of your friends outside school anymore, I've noticed." Angela looked at her daughter with love and concern. "Sweetie, is there anything you want to discuss with me about you and your brother?"

Lynette thought that this was her chance to bring up her relationship questions about Tom. *But how can I do it?* She guessed that she should start slowly and watch her mother for cues.

"Mom—um, you know Tom's problem? How he gets scared... um, that's not strong enough ... he gets panicked about the nudity stuff?"

"Yes, sweetie, and I'm really happy that the two of you won't have to face the school's stupid naked Program."

Lynette began to feel uncertain about what she should say now, but she was determined to forge on, so she continued.

"Well, it was maybe four or five months ago, I thought of a way to help him." She decided not to mention any details about the classroom scene which had made both her and her brother so horny. "We were going to work on a project but it seemed that Tom couldn't focus. I figured out that it was 'cause of something he had seen in school so I asked him. He had gotten a big dose of seeing more nudity that day but it turned out he had seen it on the classroom camera, not in person. But he told me that when he watched it, he got aroused, you know, um... got hard."

Angela's eyes widened at this but she didn't say anything, just motioned Lynette to continue, but Lynette had noticed her mom's involuntary reaction.

"Um... Mom, we're really open with each other about everything, you know. We do talk about personal stuff; we trust and respect each other. Anyway, Tom told me that he didn't have a real strong panic reaction like he does when it's like a... direct... threat to him. Instead, he told me that he couldn't stop watching the screen, but as he did, his panic just kinda went away. So it

occurred to me to try something... um... sorta... I guess you'd say it was radical. I figured if he got exposed to nudity and it wasn't a direct threat, maybe he wouldn't panic. So I got him to agree to let me blindfold him and then I undressed and let him touch me..."

Angela gasped, "You undressed with him there? Goodness! What happened—what did he do?" she asked, but Lynette saw that her face showed only amazement and concern; there was no shock or disapproval in her mother's expression.

Reassured, Lynette went on. "Yeah, I figured I'd try to see if his... um, you know, arousal, okay?—would keep the panic away; first, if he couldn't see anything, and then—I ... um, let him touch my body with his eyes covered—then if he didn't get panicked, I'd let him take off the blindfold to see me naked."

"Lynette! You did that? How did you know to try something like that?"

"Mom, we're so close, you know? I guess it felt right to me. And it worked! I was able to pull Tom's pants down while he was touching me—that was after he had yanked off the blindfold—and he didn't even notice his pants were down at first!"

"How can that be, honey? How could you do that without his being aware?"

"Well, I guess while he was touching me, it musta really distracted him. *Giggle*. He *was* kinda aroused—got super hard, you know. I could see it! *Giggle*. I just pushed his pants and shorts down. But then I kissed him and, wow, that did get his attention! He stopped rubbing my titties—he stopped then to see what I was doing—that's when he pulled away from me and stared at me—and saw his pants at his feet—but he didn't panic! He actually looked like he'd been hit on the head with a block of wood. But right after that, I got him to strip off the rest of his clothes and he did it without reacting—um... panicking... but wow, was he super aroused. Damn, he's big. *Giggle*."

"So the two of you were naked together?"

Lynette nodded shyly. "Yeah. Totally. It was just so awesome," she added quietly.

She searched her mom's face anxiously, looking for any sign of anger or even concern; however, if anything, Angela's expression was one of mild surprise or perhaps even faint amusement.

Smiling now, Angela prompted, "You mentioned you had Tom touching you when you got undressed while he was blindfolded..."

Lynette blushed deeply, nodded, and looked down.

"Ah..." Angela nodded. "And you liked it, I gather."

Lynette turned an even deeper shade of red. She felt closer to her mom than she'd felt in a long time. She realized that her mother wasn't shocked or worried about what she had done with Tom; so it seemed. She felt relieved and was encouraged to continue.

"Aaahh... Before I took my clothes off, I took his hand and put it on my chest," she practically

whispered. "He couldn't see, like I said, and I got him to stroke my titties. Then I put his hand down below and I let him feel me there—I wanted to get him really aroused like he said he was when he saw the stuff on the classroom monitor. I was so, so nervous about whether my idea would work."

She paused to look at her mother who showed no reaction other than an expression of understanding. Gaining more confidence, she continued.

"Then I wanted to see if he was... um, you know, responding to my body? So I put my hand inside his pants and could feel his 'thing' all big and hard and it kind of felt good so I wrapped my fingers around it but-then-he-pulled-away-all-embarrassed-and-told-me-to-stop," she whispered in a rush.

"Goodness!" Angela exclaimed. "But you said his clothes were off..."

"Um, not yet... ahh... that's when I slipped off my panties and let him feel me down there. Then he tore off the scarf around his head, so I distracted him by grabbing his head and kissing him. That worked so well that he didn't even realize it while I pushed his sweatpants and boxers down. Then the cool air musta got his attention. *Giggle.*"

"Wooo... that was pretty daring, little girl. I'll bet you enjoyed yourself there."

Lynette nodded, still giggling. "Oh yeah, I did ...a lot! It was awesome, Mom, I think I fell in love with him all over again. We were kissing and holding each other, then pulling away and looking at each other, and then back to kissing again. And he saw he was naked standing there with me and didn't panic. God, Mom, when I pulled down his underwear, his penis was sticking out like a pole. It was so big! I mean, I've seen plenty of boys' penises in school but his was pushed against me and it looked so big and fat and felt rock hard."

"Lynette, darling, you didn't..."

"Oh, no, Mom. We didn't... um, you know... go all the way. Umm... I wasn't scared or anything, but I sure can't see something like that going inside of me! I did sorta like feeling it, though... I love how it looks and I love holding it too ... is that bad?"

Angela smiled kindly and shook her head. "Sweetie, it's never wrong to appreciate an erect penis. Many girls actually love to see them on their guy. Sure, I guess that at first they can look a bit scary, but penises are just part of a guy's body," she giggled, "actually an essential part, too."

"But Tom's penis just looks so big. It seems to be bigger than many of the boys in the Program—and I heard boys are very sensitive about their penis size too, why is that?"

"I'm no expert on penises, honey"; they both giggled at that, "but I'm guessing that boys think that if girls think that their penises look small, the girl won't be interested in them. But the fact is that most are somewhere around five or six inches long when erect and that's plenty long to feel good inside a woman. I've also heard that a penis that's too long can hurt. It can bump into a girl's cervix and that doesn't feel so good."

“Ummm... Tom’s must be a bit longer than six... it’s thick, though. God, it’s gorgeous... I... oh, this is hard for me to say...” Lynette choked.

“Oh, sweetie, never be embarrassed about talking about sex with me. You know you can always talk to me about anything—you always have, right?”

“Yeah, I guess... ummm... Mom... Does it hurt the first time... you know... when you go all the way with a boy?”

Angela felt herself relax; she hadn’t realized until now how tense she was, but now she was relieved to know for certain that her daughter was still a virgin. But she realized that before she ended this conversation with her daughter, she’d still have to deal with the serious romance which had developed between the step-siblings.

*Oh well, she thought, let’s forge on...*

She looked at Lynette with compassion and love as she framed her answer. “Yes, it might hurt some if your hymen is still completely intact, but it depends on a number of things like the boy’s size but if things go right, it might not hurt much at all. What helps most is to be prepared properly.”

Lynette couldn’t believe how frank her mother was being with her and how accepting her mom was that she and Tom were sexually active with each other. She and her mom were discussing the most intimate of acts between people, yet her mom was actually not getting angry at her or embarrassing her or even warning her that she shouldn’t be thinking about sex at all. This was so fabulous.

“Mom?” she asked uncertainly. “Ah... what do you mean by being prepared properly?”

“The best way to ensure comfortable—no, pleasurable—sex is by having enough foreplay. I’m sure you know that when a girl gets excited, her vagina secretes a fluid...”

Lynette blushed and dipped her head in embarrassment.

“Honey, don’t be embarrassed; all girls... we all get wet down there... anyway, girls get wet to let the boy’s penis slide into our vaginas easier. When you get horny, you get wet, right?”

Lynette nodded shyly.

“So foreplay, that’s manual or oral stimulation, helps the juices flow. Obviously you’ve learned to masturbate...”

“Oh, geez, Mom!”

“Honey, please. You’re a healthy, young girl who obviously has a healthy sex drive. Both boys and girls do it. I started doing it when I was maybe twelve and still love to do it, even though I have your dad to satisfy... um, well, you know. Ah... Anyway, it’s totally normal for a girl to feel horny and want to masturbate and having orgasms is wonderful. Never be embarrassed about your sexual needs, darling. Returning to your question, being prepared means getting nice and

wet after plenty of stimulation to get the parts ready. If the girl is really close to her orgasm when the boy first goes into her, she probably won't feel the pain as much as if she wasn't as ready. You see?"

Lynette nodded, again blushing bashfully. She realized now that she couldn't keep any secrets hidden from her mom and was surprised that now, instead of her initial intense embarrassment, she only had a feeling of relief. That was until she heard her mom's next question.

"So how far did you and Tom actually go, if you feel you can tell me?"

Lynette shyly answered, "He sucked on my boobs, Mom. I really loved how that felt. Then I got this real strong urge to suck his penis—I saw girls doing that to the boys in school and the boys liked it so much, so I wanted to give Tom that pleasure too. Then while I was doing that, Tom pulled me around him so he could reach my... ummm... pussy... and started to lick it ... my God, that felt so awesome..."

"That's called a sixty-nine, sweetie..."

"Uh huh. Yeah, I know about that; in school I see it happening lots of times. Anyway, he was licking me there and I went crazy and exploded. I never felt anything like that before, but while I was coming down from my orgasm, Tom went off and *OhMyGod!* His penis just exploded and his stuff shot into my mouth and some even landed on my face!"

"Ah. So you got to taste it then."

Lynette nodded, grimacing. "Yeah... it was kinda warm and a little sticky; tasted like salty, bleachy paste. But wow, he shoots so hard."

Angela smiled. "And after your first taste of Tom and of having oral sex, you found you liked it, yes?"

Lynette nodded bashfully and blushed. "I love him so much, Mom. He loves me too," she said dreamily and a tear slid from her eye.

"So, honey, the big question now is: are you thinking about having intercourse with Tom?"

The question immediately shocked Lynette out of her reverie and she looked pleadingly at her mother.

"*OhMyGod!*... You know how to ask the tough ones! Oh jeez, Mom, I don't know! Yeah, we've kinda discussed it... talked around the question without really making any commitment... I mean... both of us feel really strong urges when we're playing with each other... god, I really think I want to feel his cock inside me but... but he's my brother... but he's not, really... well, you know what I mean... We're so in love... I wish we could be married."

Angela felt her heart lurch in sympathy. "Well, I kind of thought this was where the two of you were headed. You kids always behaved like you were married, the way you act together and watch out for each other. I guess the idea that you could be a couple isn't illegal, since you're not related by blood, just through my marriage to Dad—but even still, some people may regard it as

taboo, though. But I'm sure that if the two of you still feel the same about each other when you're eighteen, that something could be worked out."

"*SQUEAL!*" Lynette flew into Angela's arms. "Oh, thank-you-thank-you, Mom! I was so worried that you'd be mad..."

Angela held her daughter tightly, tears running down her cheeks. Then she pulled back a little and looked Lynette in the eyes.

"My darling little girl. I'd never be angry with you because you've always been so responsible; Tom's been too. You're both amazing kids." Angela said as she released her embrace and motioned Lynette to sit on the bed with her. "You've been unwillingly thrust into an environment of uncontrolled sexuality in school, and as I've read in the papers, the schools are filled with constant promiscuous sexual activity. The two of you have had plenty of chances to go much further than you have in exploring your physical relationship. Yet you've held off because of your maturity and senses of responsibility. This makes me very proud of you, Lynette.

"But I need to give you my 'concerned parent' talk. Both of you must absolutely understand what I'm going to say... and Dad and I will need to talk to Tom about this too, later this evening. The feelings that both of you have for each other may seem to be very special and those feelings may seem extremely important to you both right now, but this romantic love you've developed for each other is a new phase of your relationship. Take it from me, your old mom, that the intensity in romantic relationships eventually begins to fade and becomes replaced with a new relationship status. Just what that status turns out to be will be determined by how you develop long after the novelty of your love is gone. Just look at what happened with Dad and his ex. They were very much in love when they got married.

"Right now, there's probably no way that you would ever acknowledge to me—or even to yourselves—that you'd love each other any less, but believe me, there'll be times that you'll annoy each other and there'll be times when you'll find your need to just be alone to cool off after a disagreement..."

Angela saw Lynette's face fall.

"Oh, darling," she exclaimed, "I'm not telling you that I think that you won't stay together. I can see how much you love each other, even right now, living together as siblings. But you're changing your relationship and this new relationship needs time to build and get stable. That's why I said you need to give yourselves some time, at least till you're eighteen, before you make a decision that will affect the rest of your lives."

Lynette nodded. "Yeah, Mom, I know what you mean and Tom and I agree that we don't want to jump into anything as serious as marriage so soon. But when I said 'I wish we could be married,' I really meant... umm... the physical stuff... yeah, that part of our love for each other. We've held that part off, but it's not easy... Umm... You wouldn't mind if Tom and I went ... you know ... um... and I'm ... er, kind of scared about the pain too."

Angela smiled ruefully. "Darling, I completely understand. You know, I think I must be crazy to

tell you that you can go ahead and make love to Tom, but I can see how frustrating it can be if you keep holding off while feeling that strongly about each other. Hell, teens today screw each other just to satisfy their lust with no love at all involved, like you told me they do in that awful naked Program. You've told me how some of the kids have intercourse with everyone watching, too. It's good that you're not jumping into anything; you're being responsible about taking that big step.

"And your concern about any first-time sex pain may be a sign that deep inside yourself, you don't feel quite ready yet for that step. I also can't believe I'm telling you this, but I wouldn't be terribly concerned about that pain. Sure, there can be some pain, but every virgin's experience is different. For me, it was a sharp sting that passed quickly..."

"God, Mom, TMI!" Lynette blushed.

"Well, you brought it up, darling. Some advice you'll probably find embarrassing: if you want to get yourselves ready for Tom to deflower you, what I'd suggest is that he try stretching your hymen by using his fingers in you. I know you use tampons so your hymen must have an opening that his finger can fit into. If he's careful, perhaps the membrane there can stretch a bit with his finger. I've read that careful stretching sometimes works to open the girl up a bit, so you may only feel a sharp pinch when his penis pushes through your hymen. And lots of real hot foreplay gets the juices flowing, too. If you're nice and wet, things slide much easier."

Lynette blushed again. "I can't believe my *mom* is telling me about this..." she groaned.

Angela chuckled. "You *did* ask, right? Oh yes, this does bring up another major decision, Lynette. Remember, we opted you out from the birth-control shot back in the fall when we learned about that Program idiocy. I think we need to get you on the pill instead; the shot has anti-disease stuff and a powerful but short-acting hormone to make it work fast and I don't want those extra drugs for you. Actually, I went on the pill when I was about your age. Not only is it one of the more effective forms of birth control, it'll also help to make your periods less crampy. And you need to promise me that you'll wait until you're safe before you make love, okay? All I want from you is your promise that you'll be careful."

"Oh, Mom, I love you... thanks for being so good to me... to us. Um... when can we go to the doctor?" she asked, smiling.

Angela smiled and softly squeezed her hands. "I'll call for an appointment tomorrow."

Lynette leaned over and kissed her.

Angela put her hands on Lynette's shoulders and looked into her eyes. "I'm amazed at what you were able to do for Tom, sweetie. Tom's shrink told Dad and me about a therapy for his phobia and it looks like you kind of stumbled on a way of doing that kind of therapy with him. Do you think it helped him at all in his ... ah, public nudity situations?"

"Um, Mom, when we do it, we're just naked together. I think he can do it with me 'cause he trusts me so much. I asked him if he thought that he could be with other naked people and he said

that the idea still scares him. I'm still trying to figure out something to help him, but I get the feeling he's not ready for anything more intense than the two of us."

Angela nodded. "Okay, that makes sense. You've kind of brought about a small miracle, sweetie, and I appreciate it; so will Dad when I tell him. You've started Tom on a path to overcome his problem, it seems. Hey—we need to get back to the clothes for your summer course."

They both giggled and started laying out a few more possible outfits on Lynette's bed.

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The following weeks in school were intense, not for Tom's and Lynette's fellow year-ten students, but for the year elevens, since the elevens were completing their term's classes while also getting ready for the special GCSE days. All the year elevens were heavily engaged in review studies for those exams, so there was very little Program drama in the school now, especially in the classrooms. It was not as hectic for the year tens and Tom, in his independent study program, had mostly finished his year's work. And Lynette had been working right along with Tom, keeping well ahead of the rest of her classmates.

Lynette and Tom expected just one more somewhat quiet month until it would be the time for their European trip. They met with their teachers to get the year's final assignments and to arrange to take any tests that they'd miss by leaving school early. Much of the two final weeks of school would mostly be devoted to review and exams, anyway.

It was an ordinary Wednesday morning, less than three weeks before they were to leave school; as usual, the two siblings were riding their bikes to school. Tom glanced over at Lynette, who was riding next to him, as they approached the building.

"Sweetie," he said, "you have a real faraway look. And you're smiling. Thinking of our trip?"

She blushed a little. "Um, no, just thinking about my talk with Mom, you know, about you and me... um, how she said it would be kinda okay for us to make love... I was thinking about that..." she said softly.

"Ah," Tom nodded, "can't believe the folks were so fuckin' cool about us—getting you on the pill too—shit, how awesome is that!"

They rode past the building's main entrance and Lynette glanced over at the crowd of kids there.

"So there's the morning strip show; don't look, Tom. Some of the kids—oh, looks like they're stripping each other. Making a show of it too. And I see four, no five teachers keeping an eye on things. Even the rent-a-cop's there. See, the security here is good, not like we've heard about other schools."

They rounded the side of the building, heading to their usual bike rack which was located near the staff parking area. Back in the fall, Tom had begun using this bike rack since it was out of sight of the morning Program stripping show at the school's front door.

Tom grunted. "Yeah, thankfully the teachers do keep a tight control on things here. Not letting

kids go crazy like we heard happens in other schools.”

The siblings had no warning that anything was amiss as they pulled up to the bike rack. They stopped, dismounted, and locked up their bikes, all the while talking about their day's plans; then they walked over to the building's rear door.

As they approached the door, it suddenly sprang open and three guys wearing ski masks jumped out while two more came running up behind them; they had hidden behind a car parked near the door.

One of them grabbed Lynette, who screamed, as three tackled Tom. Lynette's scream galvanized Tom. One guy had gotten him in a hammerlock, intending to immobilize him, but Tom, with his height advantage and leg strength, drove his heel backward into his assailant's shin, and when the guy bent over in pain and released his arm lock hold, Tom instantly grabbed his arms, then quickly bent forward and down, throwing the guy over his head into two of the guys immediately in front of him.

The fourth guy let go of Lynette and lunged for Tom but lost his balance and fell as he stumbled over the others on the ground, one was flailing about in pain. Hearing Lynette yell a second time, Tom turned away from them and looked to see where the fifth guy was. He was facing Lynette; he had tried grabbing her from behind, wrapping his arms around her chest, but Lynette had reacted by kicking her heel back into the guy's knee and then twisting herself around in his loosened grip allowing her to pull away.

She was now facing him; he was bent over in pain from her kick and holding his knee. With another yell, she grabbed his shoulders, pulled him up straight, and then drove her knee up hard into his groin. He screamed and doubled over, falling into Tom, who seized him by his arms, yanked him up, and threw him hard against the side of the building where he slumped to the ground unconscious. Lynette staggered away; no one was close to her now.

“Run for help!” Tom shouted at her and she took off, screaming for help.

As a result of the confused melee, with two of the guys now climbing to their feet and two others trying to get their bearings, it took several seconds for the attackers to realize that Lynette was running away; then one of them started chasing after her. Lynette had gotten a big head start; in addition to her cycling, she had also been running with Tom and was a fast runner, at least faster than the guy chasing her. He gave up the chase as soon as she turned the corner of the building, heading around to its front. He realized that if he continued after her, he'd be seen chasing her, and she was faster than he was, anyway. That's when he took off his mask and drifted away from the scene.

Meanwhile, two of the three remaining guys were still trying to tackle Tom to subdue him, but Tom had his back to the building now and was fending them off with shoves, kicks, and punches. Then the third guy, who had hung back looking for an opening, rushed him from the side and got a grip on Tom's shoulder and neck. Tom twisted around and grabbed the guy around the waist, lifted him up, and threw him at the other two, hitting one, and the two of them went down in a

tumbling heap, one of them screaming in pain. But one guy was still standing and ran at Tom, arms stretched out to grab him. Tom seized his arms, heaved him up and swung him around, slamming him against the ground. He hit hard and went limp. The two guys who had been knocked down slowly got to their feet and, finally realizing that they'd had enough of Tom, began to run away from the area as the door to the school burst open and the school's police resource officer came out, blowing a whistle.

One of the two attackers, moving with an awkward shuffling limp, had reached the corner of the school building leading to its front and the general parking area. He glanced back over his shoulder to see if he was being chased when he collided with a teacher who just had come running around the corner. The teacher grabbed him and then snatched off the ski mask he was still wearing. The other attacker, at the sound of the whistle, had stopped trying to limp away and just stood there slumped in defeat, as another teacher came up to him and took hold of his arm. Assured that the two had been subdued, the police officer called to have the two of them brought over to him, then bent down to quickly examine the two men on the ground. Then the head teacher rushed out of the school, glanced around, and went over to Tom, who was panting heavily and still looking around him wildly for any more attackers. Taylor began trying to get Tom's attention to talk to him. Suddenly Lynette appeared running around the corner of building, trailed by several more teachers. She ran up to Tom.

"Oh, god Tom... are you okay, are you...?"

"Yeah..." he puffed. "What the hell was all that about?" he demanded rhetorically, still looking around wildly.

Taylor was still trying to get Tom's attention, but Tom was still pumped up in reaction to the attack.

"Mr Armstrong, are you okay? What happened here?" Taylor again attempted to get Tom to answer.

The officer called to Taylor, "These two boys are really injured, Dr Taylor, I called for an ambulance." Then he called to the teachers who were holding the two other boys. "Bring those others here. Say, they look like pupils here, yeah, I recognize him," he pointed, "and him too." indicating the second one. "Why were they all wearing masks?"

The teachers led the two boys to the police officer, who took a pair of handcuffs out and cuffed one boy and as he did, he felt something hard and clanky in the boy's blazer pocket. He fished out a pair of handcuffs.

"Oh, really now," he said, "so what's this?"

A teacher kneeling next to one of the boys on the ground, who was crying and writhing in pain, called to the officer, "This one has a chain wrapped around his waist!"

Meanwhile Tom had caught his breath and had begun answering Taylor's questions.

"I don't know, sir, they ambushed me and Lynette when we got here. One guy grabbed her and

the others tackled me. I had to stop them..."

"You certainly did," Taylor said as he glanced around. "But I don't know what to say... fighting is a cause of expulsion..."

Lynette, who had been holding onto Tom, shouted, "Oh no! He was protecting me—and himself too! Four guys on one isn't fighting! We didn't do anything to start that!"

Taylor shrugged, "Apparently so. We need to sort this... talk to everyone involved..."

Just then an ambulance pulled into the staff lot while a large group of kids had been assembling around the scene.

"Teachers!" Taylor ordered, "Round up the pupils and get them into the building. The show is over, let's move!"

Kids began shuffling away, the teachers herding them inside.

Two paramedic techs appeared from the ambulance and one began hauling equipment out while the second went to check on the boys on the ground. The one near the wall was lying quite still, a teacher squatting next to him had checked him and reported to the tech who came to check him, "He's out. He's breathing okay and has a pulse, but it's slow."

Then the nurse came out and went to the unconscious boy; she told the medic she'd check him out while he assisted his partner.

The other medic had gone to the boy who was lying on his back and screaming that his shoulder hurt. After a quick exam, he told his partner to get a back brace board and a second gurney from the ambulance and the two of them began working to slowly slide the wailing boy onto the back board. As they strapped him onto it, Taylor went over to them.

"How are they?" he asked.

"This one looks like he's got at least a broken clavicle," was the response. "The other kid's unconscious so we can't tell for sure yet. What's with the ski masks?"

Taylor shrugged. "Don't know yet."

Meanwhile, Lynette had called home and told Angela what happened and she was now on her way to the school.

Several more police officers had arrived and they were questioning witnesses to learn what had happened while the two injured boys were being loaded into the ambulance.

Then Lynette recalled, "Oh! there were five of them, not four!"

The school officer looked at her. "I only saw four when I came out, miss."

"One grabbed me and four went for Tom. Tom pulled the kid off me and I ran for help and one of them chased after me. He couldn't catch me—maybe he figured their kidnapping or whatever didn't work, so he must have took off."

Eventually a small group was gathered in the school's conference room: Tom and Lynette, Angela, the school officer, the two teachers who were first on the scene, a detective, and Taylor. Another detective and a police officer were separately questioning the two uninjured boys in other rooms—actually they did have injuries, major bruises, but not serious enough to warrant a hospital visit. Their parents had been called and were on the way.

When the group got settled, Angela asked, "I want to be sure that Tom and Lynette aren't in any trouble. Do I need to get my solicitor here?"

The school officer, Police Constable McDonald, answered, "Ma'am, you can relax. Fortunately the incident happened at the staff carpark. The school had some break-ins there in the past so there's a monitoring camera mounted over the area that caught everything and recorded it. I had your security person check the recording a few minutes ago and we saw that what happened to your children was completely unprovoked."

"Thank you," she replied.

The detective continued, "What I need to learn is what this incident was all about, so let me begin with the pupils here. Tell me what happened." He pointed to Lynette.

Lynette began, "We had just locked up our bikes and went to the door. These guys came rushing out suddenly and I was grabbed from behind..."

"How many?"

"Three came out of the school. Also, one guy grabbed me and another tried grabbing Tom; they came from behind us. I think another one tried to hold me too but then he had to help the others with Tom."

"That's five, but we can only account for four." the detective said.

PC McDonald interjected, "The security cameras showed that there were five assailants."

"Yeah," Lynette continued, "I told the constable that when I ran away—Tom got me loose from the boy who was holding me after I kicked one and got away from him—then one of them followed after me but I was faster. I think he just disappeared, he must have seen that whatever they were trying had failed. I got some teachers to go back to Tom but it took a minute or two."

"Okay, Tom, let's hear your description," the detective requested.

"When that guy grabbed Lynette, I threw off the one trying to hold me into the others. Then I got Lynette free; told her to run to get help. Then I had to fight off the four of them. I held on till help came."

"You fought off *four* boys?"

Tom shrugged.

The detective looked at him. "Two in the hospital and two more walking wounded. And you're not hurt?"

Tom shrugged again.

PC McDonald commented, "Just watch that tape. The kid is like Conan the Barbarian..."

"All right then, McDonald, what did you see?" the detective asked.

"Well, sir, before seeing the tape, anyway, I was near the gym, it's in the back of the building. There was a report of a damaged door lock and I was checking on it. That's when I heard a girl scream for help. It seemed to come from the carpark, so I ran to the door that opens out to the carpark and saw two of them running and two on the ground. And then these two teachers came running from the front of the building."

One of the teachers broke in, "We were monitoring the Program's pupil disrobing activity in front when Lynette here came running up, shouting that people were attacking her brother. Several of us ran over there."

"Anyone witness any part of the fight...?" the detective began.

Tom growled, "There was no fight. They tried to hurt my sister."

"Ahhh, the incident? Who arrived first?" the detective asked.

"Detective Murray, I did, together with these two teachers. But I mentioned the security camera recording," McDonald said.

"Quite. I'll need a copy," he responded.

"Will do."

DC Murray continued, "But this doesn't answer what the attack was supposed to accomplish. Or a motive either. They wore ski masks so they didn't want to be recognized. But one had handcuffs and another, a chain. I hope we can get this sorted after interviewing the perpetrators. I certainly don't find any reason to lay charges against you two," he said, indicating Tom and Lynette. "You were clearly victims in this case."

They both relaxed, as did Angela, at hearing that.

Murray looked at Taylor. "As well, I recommend that you don't sanction either of these students for fighting, sir; right now this seems to be a felonious battery, also possibly attempted kidnapping, committed on both of them and they responded in self-protection."

Taylor nodded in agreement. "Yes sir. But I will—my school's governors will—need to know about those other pupils—what they intended by their violence. And who the missing fifth pupil was. As well, the Armstrongs should know what was intended."

"Agreed," Murray said. "If they're minors, this will all wind up as juvenile proceedings so you understand that the details are to be confidential?"

"I do," Taylor nodded.

"Then we have nothing more for now," Murray said. "If you need to contact us further, please

use the case number I wrote on the card I gave you.”

He rose and began to leave, motioning the school officer to follow. Taylor then dismissed the teachers and turned to Tom and Lynette and sighed. “I’m sorry for your awful experience, both of you. I certainly would have no problem if you wanted to take off today... perhaps even the rest of the week if you need to. We can also offer you counseling if you’d want that. Mrs Armstrong? Do you want to add anything?”

Angela glanced at her children and they both shook their heads imperceptibly.

“Dr Taylor, it appears that Lynette and Tom are okay for now; is that right, kids?”

“Yes. Mom.”—“I’m good, Mom.” they replied in unison.

“But if they have a delayed reaction...” she continued.

Taylor extended his arm, palm upward. “My offer remains. Whatever help, counseling, time off—within reason, that they need. Is that good?”

They all chorused “Yes.”

“Excellent...”

Lynette raised her hand and Taylor nodded at her. “Ahh, sir, I think I’d be more comfortable today if I could stay with Tom? Like attending classes with him on video?”

Taylor nodded. “I think that would be fine, certainly. I’ll let your teachers know that you’ll be in the library.” He sighed. “If that’s all now, you can go; I’ve got lots to get sorted now.”

After a brief chat with Tom and Lynette, Angela left, and the siblings gathered their backpacks and went to the library.

## Chapter 12

In the library, Lynette and Tom attended their third period class remotely. After the class, Lynette had an idea.

“Hey Tom—instead of staying in here for lunch, let’s try to see how you react to being with kids in the lunchroom.”

Tom was very dubious. “I don’t know, sweetie. Look, there’s only several weeks left where I have to deal with school nudity and...”

“No, Tom, I think this is important ‘cause it’s not only at school. There must be other things that trigger your panic—I know it comes out with the nudity crap, but I have a real strong feeling that it’s affecting your life in other ways. Like, you know, you don’t have any friends, right? The last time I can think of you having any friends is back when we still lived in Toronto. Your isolation here in this room isn’t helping you learn social skills. So how about it? Let’s try. For me?”

Tom grudgingly agreed, and before their lunch period began, the two set out for the lunchroom. They arrived a few minutes early, went through the line, and then Tom insisted that they find an out-of-the-way table. They sat and soon the mob began arriving; Tom noticed a few naked kids getting on the lunch line, so he got up and changed his seat to sit next to Lynette, who was facing away from the rest of the room. Then he heard a few voices calling Lynette’s name.

“Hey Lynette, who’s the bloke...” a girl asked. “Oi, it’s your brother... hi, Tom.”

Tom looked around and recognized Audrey, a friend of Lynette’s; she had been to his house fairly frequently, visiting Lynette. With her was another friend of Lynette’s, Janet. Tom greeted both girls and Lynette invited them to sit at their table.

“Hey, whatever happened out there this morning, girlfriend?” Janet asked. “We saw you two blokes in the middle of it all. The ambulance and the bobbies and all the teachers and... say, how come Tom’s in the caf today? Tom, I thought you were kept locked up in the library. How’d you escape?” she giggled.

“Yeah, girlfriend,” Audrey broke in, “what was all that drama this morning?”

“Um, well...” she looked at Tom, who shrugged. “We’re not sure why, but a few jerks jumped Tom and me as we were coming into the school...”

“Whaaat?”—“OhMyGod, why?” both exclaimed together. “You get hurt?” Audrey asked, looking Lynette up and down.

“Thankfully no,” Lynette answered. “But we don’t know why they did it. It was awfully scary but Tom stopped them. I hope we find out why they did it.”

Janet looked at Tom. “But there was an ambulance too... Tom, who got hurt?”

“Um, couple of berks—that the word? Yeah. They grabbed Lynette, well, one did, so I stopped him. Also the others when they tried to grab me. They took two kids to the hospital.”

“Wow...” both girls breathed and looked Tom over as he blushed.

“You fought off two guys?” Audrey exclaimed as Tom slowly nodded.

“So tell us, Mr He-Man, you never leave the library,” Janet remarked. “So what brought you here now?”

Lynette answered, “I was talking with Tom about that. He’s gotten so wrapped up with that distance-learning thing the school is trying out that he really never took the chance to get out and be with some other kids. Since the term’s almost done, we figured it wouldn’t hurt if Tom gets around more.”

They settled down and began eating as the conversation turned to school matters. After about fifteen minutes, a minor commotion began at one end of the room and the kids turned to look.

Audrey sniggered, “Looks like something’s happening at the Program kids’ table. Again.”

They could hear calls of “reasonable request!” ring out.

Tom glanced up in that direction, then looked away when he noticed a girl on her knees in front of a standing naked boy’s crotch. He shuddered.

Audrey noticed Tom’s discomfort. “Yeah, that bothers me too, Tom; the whole soddin’ Program idea is nuts.”

“I wish the kids would just refuse to strip off,” Tom grumbled. “That would end it, wouldn’t it?”

“I think they force you if you don’t,” Audrey said.

Janice shook her head. “Nuh uh. Last autumn I read in that blog against the Program that a whole entire school—all the kids there—refused. I think the blog said that the teachers aren’t allowed to use force to strip kids. And that story got put in the newspapers too.”

Lynette retorted, “But I heard that some kids got forced anyway. Maybe that crap doesn’t happen anymore. So what happened at that school? This is the first time I heard about a whole school that refused.”

“I read that someone at that school organized the kids somehow,” Janice went on. “But then the blog took off on another topic, covering kids’ human rights, goin’ on about some Program things being illegal. Maybe nothing like that refusal happened at our school ‘cause the Program here isn’t horrid like I heard at some other schools; the kids aren’t so keen to make a real fuss...?”

Audrey broke in, “Yeah, I think you nailed it. The kids who’d make the real fuss if they felt threatened just kinda buck up and do it whilst the shy ones first freak out and then try to survive their week. So no organized opposition got going here.”

Tom had been studiously keeping his gaze averted away from the activities near the table where the naked kids were gathered. But then his thoughts were interrupted by Janice.

“So Tom, looks like you escaped being picked for the Program so far, since you and Lynette are

finished with the term pretty soon, aren't you? They won't be calling kids for the Program starting next week 'cause the revising for exams will be starting."

"Yeah, we're finishing here in two weeks. Can't be soon enough, too," he muttered, but then turned pale as he glimpsed two naked girls coming in their direction.

Lynette saw Tom's alarmed expression so she turned to look at what he had seen. Tom appeared like he was getting ready to bolt, so she put her hand on his arm.

"Listen," she whispered into his ear, "just hold yourself together..."

The two girls were being followed by several boys and that small group had reached a table not far from Tom's and Lynette's, when a boy shouted, "Reasonable request! I want to see Kathy go down on Grace!"

There was a quiet, hurried negotiation between the two girls and the boys, and then one of the girls sat herself down on top of a table located only about twenty feet away from Tom, who was now squirming uncomfortably.

"Shit, Tom," Lynette whispered urgently in his ear, "this is your perfect chance! It's like you saw on the class monitor! No one's threatening you and you don't even have to watch if it gets too intense! Let yourself go, get aroused, see if it keeps away your panic."

Tom shuddered but nodded at her and she kissed his cheek. Meanwhile, the girl sitting on the table locked herself in an embrace with the other girl who remained standing; they began kissing each other, then the standing girl pulled away.

"You kiss nice, Grace," Kathy breathed. "Now I'll get to taste you."

Kathy trailed her lips down Grace's body, over her chin, then her neck, and then moved between her breasts. Now she began gently licking one of Grace's nipples while pinching, twisting, and pulling on the other one. Their moaning and gasping could easily be heard at Tom's table, and suddenly Tom felt Lynette's hand slip into his pants waist and grab his cock.

"What! No!" he hissed.

"Ooohh, you're hard!" she hissed back. "It's okay; look at the boys over there."

Two of them had their pants down around their ankles and were jerking off at the sight of a naked girl being pleased by another naked girl.

Suddenly Kathy dropped to her knees and planted her face into Grace's crotch. From the squeal and moans Grace was producing, it was clear that Kathy was working on something sensitive down there. The stimulation Grace was receiving must have been very intense because she took Kathy's head and pressed it into her crotch while clamping her thighs firmly against Kathy's head. Grace began bouncing and yelling and then went rigid, her face bright red, and howling a long "Muuuuwwwhhhh!"

Tom was in total shock; he didn't know whether he was in a panic or in total lust at the sight.

The feelings were almost the same: tightness in the chest, rapid breathing, pounding heart. Something else was pounding too—shit! He realized that Lynette's hand was pounding on his penis!

Grace was coming down from her orgasmic high and reached down to pull Kathy into a hug and kiss when the end-of-period bell rang.

Tom hurriedly pulled Lynette's hand out of his pants and, red-faced, adjusted himself. Lynette's friends had no idea what Lynette had been doing with Tom as they stood up and prepared to leave.

"Coming to class?" Janice asked Lynette as she stood up with her.

"Um, no—I'm staying with Tom today. Taylor said I could try out the distance-learning setup."

"Well, see you tomorrow, then," Janice remarked as she and Audrey each gave her a little hug and the two left.

The two naked girls, finished with their show, had also left, trailed by their red-faced, lusting admirers.

"You looked flushed before, but now you're getting pale," Lynette said as she sat down next to Tom.

"Yeah. Lynnie, it's still happening. I started to get that panicked feeling. But then, when I got horny watching them, it didn't get worse—the panic never really took over, but I still had that tight feeling in my chest. Anxiety, I think. It looks like I'm totally okay with being naked with you, but damn, seeing other kids like that still bothers me."

"Hmm, well, I wonder what we can do to try to get you over that. Anyway, we'll wait till the halls are empty to get back to the library, okay?"

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During the last period of the school day, Lynette and Tom were summoned to Taylor's office.

"Again, I'm sorry for your frightful experience this morning," he began. "If I didn't tell you that earlier, I apologize for the oversight. This was a terrible thing to happen."

Tom sighed. "Wasn't your fault, sir. I wish I knew why they did it."

"Well, in a way I suppose it's the school's fault," Taylor admitted. "I did find out why they tried that stunt and it was related to the Program."

Tom came alert. "Program? How...? I don't understand."

"The constable gave me a copy of the recording they made when they spoke to the pupils involved. Doing that was highly irregular and actually is against their normal procedure, but they wanted our school to know about a potential serious problem in the way the Program makes some children think. I'll need to discuss this matter with our staff and the governors too, but

meanwhile, I'll play a part of the recording and you'll see what their attack was all about."

Tom nodded and Lynette said, "Okay, I guess...?"

"The first voice is Simon M." Taylor said as he started playing the recording. "A year eleven. You don't need to know his full name if you don't already. Then the interviewer's voice. Some background talking is the boy's father."

We nev'r wanted t' hurt nonce. Gunner tol'us the git 'ud be easy t' 'andle, 'e's a nerd.

Who's "he" and who's Gunner?

Um, tha' Armstrong bloke. An' Gunner's Gunther Norris; 'e acts like 'e's th' action man. 'E thought tha' whole thing up.

We aren't holding a Gunther Norris. Was he with you?

Yeah, you di'n't see 'im? Damn, th' blighter must'a done a scarper... 'e said tha' 'e'd keep th' bird—Armstrong's sister—quiet.

Tell me just what were you trying to do?

Was a dumb prank, is all. We was pranking' tha' Tom Armstrong bloke. 'E's just the kind'a bloke wha' they put in th' Program 'cause 'e's all shy, y'know, very modest. Gunner foun' out tha' Armstrong's scared t'be in th' locker room an' freaks out when 'e sees kids all starkers.

So the group of you decided to play a prank on him? What did you plan?

Dad? Should...

Jist answer t'bobby. Mebbe they'll gan easier on 'ee.

Well, all five o' us blokes got put in th' Program and we 'ated, ruddy 'ated it. We was bloody 'umiliated by it an' all th' rot they made us do. But tha' Armstrong git was sat in th' library an' it looked like th' school was frikin' protectin' 'im fr'm th' Program like 'e was special an' exempt, wasn't 'e?

Go on...

Okay, we thought o' a bunch o' things we could try, y'know, t' get 'im into trouble sommat...

Like framing him, you mean?

I guess... but 'e was in 'is ivory tower like tha', untouchable, and nothin' we thought o' would work. Since 'e's never in classes, we couldn't find a way t'set somethin' up. Then Gunner thought o' us makin' 'im like 'e was in th' Program just like we 'ad t'do; all of us 'ad t'strip off starkers an' go 'round school bloody bollock-naked. So tha's wha' we planned f'r Armstrong.

And you actually thought he'd do it voluntarily?

No, no, Gunner said tha' we'd need t'force 'im t'do it. It'd be th' most direct way, 'e said; all we 'ad t'do was t'grab him, strip 'im starkers, an' then chain 'im t'th' railing in the school's lobby. Gunner said 'e was a nerd, th' git was always wrapped up in books in th' library. 'E only was in a sissy sport, runnin', an' 'e only did tha' f'r maybe a month.

So we watched Armstrong f'r a week an' saw that 'e came t'school by bike—an' 'e parked it near th' teacher car park. Tha' was bloody perfect—th' car park's very quiet before school starts 'cause all th' kids an' teachers are in th' front watching th' Program strip-off show. Th' main 'allway's also empty then, with everyone outside watchin', an' if we worked quickly, no one'd see us when we dragged Armstrong in. 'Is sister was a problem; she's always wi' 'im, but Gunner said 'e'd 'old onto 'er so she couldn't git 'elp, an' four o' us could grab and strip 'im.

You didn't consider that he'd struggle? Or make noise? Or she would?

Nah, we're all pretty strong; we play rugby so we figured we could take 'im, easy. Once we were 'oldin' onto 'im, we figured if 'e yelled, we could gag 'im—an' th' bird too.

And you thought that your plan would work. You didn't consider the consequences.

We got masks; thought tha' would be all we needed. Th' only 'itch was when we tried it on Tuesday mornin', a teacher pulled into the carpark late, so we tried again today. Everythin' went perfect today an' when Armstrong arrived an' they locked up their bikes, we got 'em trapped between us.

But he surprised you.

Damn. Gunner was so bloody wrong! Tha' bloke Armstrong was bigger 'n me an' no bleedin' wimp! I only seen 'im around the school a few times, never up close. We figured tha' four rugby players could 'andle one kid, but, damn, no one could even 'old onto 'im. If someone got a 'and on 'im, 'e just broke th' grip an' just shoved 'im away. Then 'e just picked me up like I weighed nothin' an' threw me at th' other guys. Erm... What's gonna 'appen to us...?

Taylor stopped the recording and Tom and Lynette just sat back in their seats, each heaving a sigh. They both had been leaning forward and holding their breaths while listening. They looked at the head teacher in dismay.

Taylor shrugged. "You can see our problem; jealousy, big time jealousy, mixed with a desire for some kind of revenge against the Program, and a target who they feel is getting special treatment—who actually *is* getting treated differently. I was afraid of having to deal with some kind of problem because we were treating you differently, Tom; I thought that perhaps some pupils would make a fuss over your not attending classes, but I never considered that something like this—violence—would occur."

"Dr Taylor?" Tom asked quietly.

"Yes?"

"I tried to keep low-key..."

"No, Tom, it wasn't you. Kids suss out things; we adults are amazed at how perceptive they can be at times." He sighed. "Only wish they'd apply it to schoolwork. Anyway, this presents a real problem for you next year, you know. We can't keep up that distance-learning pretense."

Tom looked at Lynette and a silent message passed between them.

"I can solve your problem, sir," Tom said, "Next year we won't be coming back. My folks are transferring us to an independent school where there's no Program."

"Hmmm, that's... ah... well, I can't say that I'm not relieved to hear that, Tom. But I'm also a little saddened. You've both been exceptional pupils here, haven't you; Lynette, you are a splendid pupil, and Tom, you are too in every way but one, that problem which we know about so well. I'll miss having you both here, actually, although I'll be happy not dealing with disruptions like we had this morning. Ah, so that also explains your arranging to leave school before the term is out. May I assume that this year ten cultural tour you're signed up for is something your new school is doing?"

Tom nodded. "Yes sir. It's a cultural program and a lot of ending year tens there do it. We'll go to museums, galleries, concerts, art fairs, dance exhibitions in about ten European cities and then write essays about what we learned."

Taylor nodded. "I'm familiar with that program. Sounds like a valuable experience."

Lynette spoke up, "I'm curious, sir; how are the injured kids? Now that I know that they only meant to embarrass Tom, I may have a tiny bit of sympathy for them. Very, very tiny."

Taylor just grunted. "Well, the one boy has a broken shoulder, no, his collarbone actually, and a separated shoulder and cracked rib. The other has a serious concussion with a possible skull fracture and several cracked ribs. His testicles are also severely bruised; that was you, Lynette, I assume?"

She nodded, blushing.

"Good for you. I heard that the other two boys have massive bruising on their chests, and their arms and legs were pretty battered. Tom is a one-man wrecking crew, as we well know."

Tom looked down, embarrassed. "I thought they were trying to hurt my sister," he said quietly. "I wasn't trying to hurt them but then they kept coming at us. If I kept them from following her, then she'd be safe."

Lynette hugged him while Taylor nodded and remarked, "Your sister has a wonderful protector, Tom."

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On their way home, Lynette tried to get Tom to talk about his lunchroom experience but he remained quiet, only responding in monosyllables to her comments. Finally, frustrated, she asked him, "But you were hard, Tom! You must have been turned on by them! Weren't you?"

Very reluctantly, Tom admitted that he was.

"But that drove away your panic! Don't you see that?"

"Yeah, honey. But don't *you* see? Soon I'll never have to worry about it anymore. There's no Program—no nudity—in the new school."

"Okay, that's true, Tommie," she agreed, "but maybe you need to think of where your panic came from, you know? Maybe your seeing naked people isn't the cause of the panic; maybe something *else* is and seeing naked people ... um, kinda triggers it? Is 'trigger' the right word?"

Tom grunted. "Your hand triggered something else during the lunch showtime, Lynnie. Shit, my cock's been kinda chubby all afternoon."

Lynette giggled.

They arrived at home and found that their mom had left a note. She was on an important job and would be home by 6 p.m.

Lynette put her pack down, sighed, and stretched. "Tommie, I need a shower. I wanna wash the feeling of those jerks who grabbed me off of me."

"Hmmm, sounds good... yeah, let me know when you're done 'cause I need one too."

They went to their rooms but a minute later, Lynette came tapping on Tom's door.

"Say, love," she said, "um... let's save some water; shower together, okay?"

Tom perked up. "Wooo... sure, sweetie; love the idea."

He quickly stripped his clothes off while Lynette watched, smirking. "You sure don't panic stripping naked with me now, stud," she teased. Then she looked at him again. "Oh my, you did get bruised. Does it hurt here?—here?" she asked, touching a few angry-looking patches.

"No, not really. Looks worse than it feels, actually."

"Good. Let's go."

Tom slipped on a robe and followed her towel-wrapped body into the bathroom. Soon they were in the shower and Lynette was showing Tom how to shampoo her hair. After that was done, she guided him in washing the rest of her body.

"My turn now, Tommie," she said as she grabbed the shampoo and began lathering up his hair. After she washed the soap off his head, she turned to soap up his body.

"You're such a hunk," she breathed as she ran her soapy hands over his chest, stroking it sensuously, then down to his abdomen, and then lower, giving his erect penis a few strokes. Tom

gasped and shuddered.

“Later,” she giggled. “Turn around.”

He did, and she lathered up his back, then moved down to his buttocks.

“God, your bum is to die for,” she breathed, as she ran her hands over its curves, feeling the hard muscles under his skin, toned by his running and cycling.

Then she reached around his hip and grabbed his erect penis.

“Yeah, this is what I’ve been waiting for all day... That lunchroom scene got me so fuckin’ hot. God, your cock feels like velvet.”

She stroked it gently.

“Ahhhh... A little faster, Lynn timer,” he coached.

Lynette slid around Tom and knelt in front of him; then taking his penis in both hands, she began stroking him faster while at the same time twisting his penis gently. Her small hands and her strong, lithe fingers were doing an exceptional job and Tom just closed his eyes and rode with the sensations. Suddenly Lynette opened her mouth and plunged it over his penis, sucking the organ deep into her mouth. Tom gasped loudly and grabbed her head as her mouth began sliding up and down the shaft and her tongue started lashing at the sensitive skin under the crown. Tom’s breathing quickened and Lynette could feel his penis swelling even more.

Tom began to feel the onset of his orgasm. As he reached his peak, Lynette’s mouth was taking long, delicious strokes as her hands kept busy on the exposed part of his shaft. She continued to tease his penis with her tongue, licking, sliding, and swirling it around his head, while her hand was milking its shaft.

“Uuuggg... Real soon,” he managed to choke.

It hit him with an overwhelming ferocity, his semen came burning up out of his groin and coursed along the shaft, the contraction in his pelvis driving a huge spurt of cum into Lynette’s mouth as their eyes met. Lynette was looking right into Tom’s eyes as she continued circling his glans with the tip of her tongue as he fired yet another volley of pleasure into her mouth. After his third shot, she pulled back as her mouth was already full, and she watched with excitement as he shot two more volleys into the cleavage between her breasts.

Then she watched as a large dollop of semen oozed out of his slit while she continued to stroke him, giggling at the feeling of power she was exerting over him by giving him his massive orgasm. Then Tom grunted and sagged against the shower wall; he put his hand on hers, peeling her fingers from around his girth.

“Aaahgh... enough...” he panted. “Too fuckin’ sensitive now...”

He sat down on the side of the tub as he caught his breath.

“That was goddamn awesome, darling,” he sighed when he could speak coherently.

Lynette giggled. "That was fun! Let's rinse off and get dry."

They soon found themselves in Lynette's bedroom and wrapped in each other's arms, kissing passionately. He led her over to her bed and laid her back on it.

"I'm gonna return the favor now, sweetie, and do you like that girl in the lunchroom?"

"Oooooohh yeah! I was so horny at seeing that! OH!" Lynette yipped as Tom sucked a nipple into his mouth and nibbled on it.

He nuzzled and fondled her breasts; then began to move lower. As Tom began kissing his way down Lynette's belly, her breathing got more ragged as her excitement grew. He rubbed his nose on her slick pubic mound and into the top of her slit, causing her to giggle as her legs spread apart in anticipation of his arrival there. He immediately noticed that her clitoris was erect, peeking out from under its little hood. Tom slid his hands under her hips and grasped her buttocks cheeks, lifting her crotch up toward his face, and blew lightly across her sensitive nub. Lynette squealed in delight and jerked her hips upward.

He gripped her cheeks firmly, pulling them gently apart, and started tonguing her vulva from the vagina's opening, licking slowly up and stopping just before his tongue would touch her clitoris. Lynette shuddered at the sensation but moaned when she realized Tom had reversed his motion and was now licking back down. Tom made a number of teasing passes like that before he finally stopped at her clitoris and circled it with the tip of his tongue.

She thrust her hips upward, trying to mash her vulva into Tom's mouth but he moved his face away and brought his mouth down to her vagina where he began to plunge his stiffened tongue into the opening in her hymen. He recalled, as he was tonguing her, that her vaginal opening was only half covered by what remained of her hymen; she had told him that she had torn it several years ago when she had taken a bad spill from her bike. He knew from the last time he had fingered her that he could slide one finger partway through the opening without causing her any pain or tearing it further. He curled his tongue into a tube and tried to push it through into her vagina.

"Oh... careful, darling... it stings a bit when you do that..." Lynette cautioned.

Tom stopped trying to tongue-fuck her vaginal opening and began to suck around her clitoris. Purring like a satisfied cat, Lynette grabbed Tom's head and pressed it firmly inward as he licked and sucked her. Releasing one hand's hold on her butt cheek, Tom brought a finger to her opening, licked it, and slid its tip into Lynette, gradually pushing through the opening in the thin membrane.

"Darling, tell me if this is okay," he murmured as he advanced his finger into her, wiggling it and turning his palm upward, searching for where he thought her g-spot might be; he had read about g-spots on one of the sites he had visited after learning that sexual stimulation didn't provoke any anxiety.

Lynette groaned, "Mmmm, feels funny—stings a bit... ooooo... now it tingles; feels a little

stretchy there, but it's good... ouch, not that far..."

Keeping his finger in her, he moved his mouth back up to her clitoris and latched onto it with his lips while he lashed it with the tip of his tongue. At the same time, his carefully probing finger felt a bumpy patch of skin in the front of Lynette's hot channel and he began rubbing the area, barely avoiding a bloody nose when Lynette squealed and bucked her hips into his face.

As Tom worked his tongue and finger faster, Lynette's squeal turned into a howl as her body tensed and her vagina clamped down tightly on his finger. She was gasping and panting as Tom's tongue and finger continued working her sensitive tissues and she rose again to another orgasm, her whole body going rigid this time and her voice was making choking, gargling noises. Then she began pushing on Tom's head.

"Uunnhhh... nnooouuaaahh... stop.... No more... too sensitive..."

He eased his lips off of her clitoris and moved his mouth down to lick at the juices oozing from her vagina. Tom loved the taste, slightly sweet and a little earthy, just like the girl, but this time there was a slight metallic taste. He pulled away and looked; the opening in her hymen seemed a bit more ragged and a tiny bit of blood was seeping from one part.

As Lynette came down from her orgasm, she heaved a great sigh and her body relaxed.

"C'mere, love," she whispered, and Tom rose up to lay beside her.

They kissed and she opened her lips, letting Tom's tongue into her mouth.

"That was fuckin' awesome, love," she said. "It really quenched my fires. I can't wait till we'll be safe with the pill so we can finally be joined like true lovers."

"Mmmm, yeah." Tom replied. "But maybe I was a little too aggressive. My finger tore your cherry a little bit on one side. Do you feel anything?"

"No, just when you put your finger in too far. Is there any blood? I bled like a pig when I fell off the bike that time."

"There was just a small amount but it stopped right away, sweetie."

"Okay, not a problem then. Kiss me again."

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The school term was almost over when a rumor began circulating in the school: something was changing with the Program. There had been cryptic reports in the news about some kind of shakeup in the Department for Education involving the National Program Committee and some changes were rumored to be taking place for the next school year. It seemed that the changes would involve removing the compulsory nudity requirement; supposedly the Program would still exist but parts would be somewhat voluntary. Tom and Lynette told their parents about the rumors and Angela assured them that she'd look into what was happening and how it would affect their new school. Three days before they would be finished with school, she had learned a

little about the planned changes.

That evening, she spoke to the siblings. “So here’s what I found out. Most schools will still be doing the Program but with some changes. There’s still a lot of uncertainty in details, but kids shouldn’t be forced any more. The orders seem to have come from very high in the government. But they’ll be having voluntary participation, yes, some kids seem to still want to do it, but most of the objectionable stuff that was forced on the students will stop—that seems to be the biggest change.”

Lynette shook her head. “No, lots of stuff is still objectionable—the nudity, for kids like Tom anyway. What’s gonna happen at the new school—um, Norwich Academy?”

Angela shrugged. “No change, they said. The head teacher told me that the changes in the Program won’t affect them at all.”

Tom nodded. “So I won’t have to hide from naked kids anymore; that’s good. Real good.”

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Soon the day had arrived for the siblings’ European trip. Duncan took Tom and Lynette, with their luggage, to the Ashford International station where they were to meet their tour group. Their travel would be mostly using Eurostar trains and part of the city-to-city travel time would be spent in orientation sessions. The tour groups were to be composed of 24 teens who had either finished year ten in their schools, or like Tom and Lynette, had finished early. The groups were chaperoned and led by a teacher and his or her spouse. There were eight of these school groups taking the summer course this year but they would all be traveling to different places on different schedules. All of the teens in the siblings’ group were students from Norwich Academy.

After dropping off his children with the group and signing them in, Duncan got them to promise to call him and Angela every evening, and then gave them both goodbye hugs. Other parents were also saying their goodbyes and leaving when the leaders asked the group to gather around them. They introduced themselves.

“Hallo, gang,” the woman called. “let’s settle down. We’ve a hour before we board. Everyone have all of their IDs and mobiles?”

There was a chorus: “Yes, Miss!”

“Excellent. We need to get sorted now. My name is Mrs Jane Douglas and most of you know that I’m the band teacher at Norwich. This is my husband, Professor Eain Douglas. He’s in the Art Department of London City College. We’re your leaders and teachers for this course. As well, your guardians for this trip, and you’ve all been told about proper behavior, haven’t you.”

“Yes, Miss!”

“Very well then. A few housekeeping items. First, if you haven’t installed the ‘Find Me’ app on your mobile, please raise your hand... Everyone has it? Excellent. If you haven’t already texted me with your app’s personal ID as your instructions stated, please do that before we leave, I think

I need two more IDs. Next, we're short some pupils for this group, one boy and one girl had to drop out. This presents us with a rooming problem because the lodgings where we will be staying in are mostly doubles and we now have eleven boys and eleven girls. So we'll need to do a rota as to spread the inconvenience around; one each of your boy groups and girl groups will need to triple up for those nights."

There were a few groans.

"It shan't be too bad, rotating who's affected..."

Lynette had raised her hand. "Miss, I can stay with my brother Tom. We're okay with doing that."

Tom nodded his agreement.

Mrs Douglas looked at her. "I suppose we can allow that, but first we'll have to ask your parents to agree." She consulted her folder. "Ah, you are our new pupils. Tom, Lynette Armstrong?"

Lynette nodded, "Yes, ma'am."

"Indeed... ah yes, here's your mum's contact; I'll ring her after we finish here." Turning to the group, she continued. "Our first stop will be at the Brussels, Belgium station and then we immediately board our train to Amsterdam in the Netherlands and the highlight of our visit there will be the Rijksmuseum, won't it. When we're underway, Dr Douglas will discuss that museum visit and lay out for you what your first essay will cover. But for now, we'll need to review the ground rules and behavior we expect from all of you whilst you're on this summer course with us. Now you all have read and signed the form that lists our expectations, but let's go over it again together..."

She covered the course's behavior and safety rules, and concluded, "You must also ensure that you keep your mobiles topped off and remember, you were asked to bring a backup accumulator for your device. Keep it handy; some of our days will be long and some devices may run flat. Remember to stay with your buddy; we'll pair up into buddies later today. And I'm certain you'll notice that everywhere we go whilst we're on our tours, we'll have a security person with the group. They're being provided by our program tour company to ensure your safety, so remember, no wandering off on your own!

"Finally, for your safety, we must insist on zero tolerance for behavior or security infractions. If you break the rules, you'll be sent home directly, and your parents shan't receive any refund. I'd expect that would make them quite cross with you, won't they. Okay, enough with the serious talk. Eain and I are your mentors and teachers, but we'd like you to also feel that you can confide in us of any problems or concerns you might have. So during this trip, if you would prefer, you may call us by our Christian names, Dr Eain and Miss Jane.

"Oh yes, we do have a few new people here today, so let's introduce ourselves now. Tell us your name and what you hope to learn from our cultural program—yes, also what languages you can speak. Begin on my left, with Janice, okay, Janice?"

“Yes, Miss...” Janice began, and the members of group introduced themselves. Tom and Lynette mentioned that they spoke French and German, but their French was the Canadian version and everyone chuckled at hearing that qualification of their language skill. French was the most commonly spoken foreign language by British natives, and the other kids were curious to hear how French-Canadian sounded.

Mrs Douglas pointed out that only a minority of British citizens were multi-lingual, in fact; she remarked that about two-thirds of the population spoke only English and less than a fifth spoke two or more languages, but European immigrants were increasing the population of those who were multilingual. She said that she was happy to learn that most of the teens knew at least French; other languages which were spoken by group members included Spanish, Russian, Italian, and German (the siblings), and one girl spoke Japanese (no surprise since she was from Japan).

Soon the gathering had broken up and the siblings found themselves the center of attention of fourteen of the group who wanted to hear some Québécois spoken by its natives.

Tom laughed. “We’re far from being French-Canadian natives. Most of them live in Quebec and lots grow up speaking nothing but their version of French. We had to learn French starting third grade, I think it was. We grew up in Toronto, in Ontario, the next province over from Quebec, and learning French in school was required. All my teachers spoke Québécois but they tried to teach it like *Metropolitan*—you know, how they speak it in France. That didn’t really work; Lynette and I still sound like French Canadians. Let me show you: *Comment allez-vous ce beau matin en attendant notre train? Je suis impatient de faire un voyage passionnant.* [How are you this fine morning as we wait for our train? I’m looking forward to an exciting trip.]

“That’s how it sounds,” Lynette took up the demonstration. “You can hear some different accents and how the words sound there, mainly vowels. But sometimes the sentences go a little differently: We learned to say, ah, okay, like this: ‘I found the blouse I wanted,’ in the Canadian dialect goes, *J’ai trouvé la blouse que j’ai de voulais* but the way the French say it is something like, *J’ai trouvé le chemisier don’t je voulais*. Isn’t that right, Tom? We use pronouns like ‘*que*’ differently and shorten a lot of them?”

“Yeah, that’s right. Last year, when we visited Paris with our folks, we had to consciously try to adjust our accents on lots of vowels; also I noticed that our nasalized vowels were much stronger than theirs. Um, let’s see, we also have a different sound with ‘T’ and ‘D’ in some cases coming before some vowels. They sound like ‘TS’ or ‘DZ.’ And a few French people got annoyed ‘cause they thought we were making fun of their language.”

Lynette giggled. “Yeah, the French are totally uptight about their French, aren’t they? So we spoke to those annoyed *citoyens*—hee hee—in rapid, idiomatic Québécois and the light dawned: ‘*Aahh, Canadien, non?*’ and all was well again.”

Tom sniggered, “Hey, and idioms—don’t get me started on how funny some can be. In Québécois the word for ‘a girlfriend’ is ‘*une blonde*.’ Even if she’s a redhead or brunette; doesn’t matter; she’s still a blonde.”

Everyone chuckled.

“And hey, try this one: The French would go, ‘*Ca va, les gosses?*’ meaning to them ‘Doing okay, kids?’ But in Canada, *gosses* actually means ‘testicles’! So to a Canadian, it’d mean ‘How’s your balls doing?’”

The kids in the group roared with laughter at that joke, but then their attention was diverted by Mrs Douglas, who called everyone to gather their belongings in preparation for boarding the train, which was now arriving at their platform.

Left alone with Tom for several minutes, Lynette whispered to him, “I’m noticing something kinda odd—did you see how a lot of the kids are acting with each other? I thought I had pegged a fair number of romantic couples but then those girls—the guys too—went and hugged and kissed some of the other kids? You notice?”

Tom nodded and whispered in reply, “Sure did; really strange. Lots of touching, kissing too, and not the same couples either.”

“Yeah. Well, if I get a chance, I’m gonna ask about it,” Lynette said.

Soon they boarded the train and were all seated in a group at one end of a coach car, where Dr Douglas passed out materials and their essay assignment and then discussed the museum visit. Tom and Lynette were sitting in a seating cluster of four; seated across from them were Simon and Roberta, who seemed to be a couple since they had been holding hands. So when Dr Douglas finished his orientation, Lynette decided to ask them about what she had seen.

“So, Roberta and Simon,” she asked, smiling, “you two are a couple?”

They looked at each other and smiled. “Yeah,” Simon said as Roberta squeezed his hand and nodded.

“Well, now I’m kinda confused,” Lynette said. “Before the train came, everyone was so familiar with each other and Simon was...”

Roberta laughed. “Oi, all of our hugging and snogging with each other? Is that it?”

“Um, yes...”

“Well... yes, you’re new, aren’t you. And so are Dimitri and Yumeko, they started at Norwich in February. All the rest of us were in this new school program—we were supposed to do that Naked in School rot but we had this amazing organized school-wide revolt against doing it, but then this new program came along and it was corkin’ brilliant!”

Simon broke in. “Cor! It was ace! We got to be such close friends with all our mates. Julie, from our group, says that she feels closer to us than even to her older brother. Anyway, we did these class sessions where we learned about caring for your mates and somehow I came to feel close to all of them, like they were all my brothers and sisters, you know? But Roberta is really special.”

They leaned over and kissed each other, smiling.

Roberta continued, "We did all kinds of brilliant stuff with each other in classes and I'm so close to my mates now. I'll miss them terribly during the holidays after this trip. But our trip lets some of us be together for a month longer. I love all of them."

Lynette was amazed. "Wow... that must have been awesome! What did you guys do?"

Roberta laughed. "Well, all kinds of things; learning about how to make someone feel good, cooperation games, massages, roleplaying social situations. It was fun and everyone, well, I guess we all bonded... our whole class did. They're all my family now, it feels like."

"Did everyone in the school do that?" Tom asked.

"They did all the year nines and most of the tens to start. There was only one group of teachers at first and they were showing bunches of teachers from other schools how it works," Simon said. "They got to almost all of the tens this spring; I think there were a few blokes missed 'cause of illnesses or something and they didn't have time left for a makeup. Yeah, some blokes started late when they moved to London so they missed too. It just started so they still need to get the rest of the school sorted in the autumn."

Then their discussion turned to other topics and soon it was time to change trains in Brussels for the trip to Amsterdam. Lynette's idea to room with Tom had been okayed by Mrs Douglas after she spoke to Angela.

### Chapter 13

Their third city was Berlin, where the group visited attractions ranging from the East Side Gallery to the Berlin Philharmonic. They were to stay four days and the accommodations had four quad rooms with two each connecting; this housed eight boys and eight girls. Two double rooms housed the remaining boy pair and girl pair, and Tom and Lynette shared a double. The large quad rooms of the rooming arrangement allowed the whole troop to congregate in one of them in the evenings where they hung out until their curfew, chaperoned by either Dr or Mrs Douglas.

The siblings were amazed at how permissive the chaperoning was, actually, since most of the group just settled on one or the other of the two king-size beds and began what looked like a group groping session while everyone chatted. Hands were everywhere, stroking bodies, and there was lots of kissing—some fairly serious, and much of the kissing and intimate touching involved kids who had traded their usual partners for others. Tom and Lynette were mystified—and before long were feeling quite out-of-place and uncomfortable, so they soon left for their own room.

On the way to their room, Tom grumbled, “Damn. That was almost too much. Douglas really let that stuff go on?”

Lynette giggled. “I’d be furious if my boyfriend was snogging another girl like those kids were getting on.” They went into their room and locked the door. “It’s so nice we get a private room for ourselves. Tommie, I know the kids at Norwich had that program Simon and Roberta told us about, but it’s just crazy how they all behave together. Looked like an orgy, almost. A clothed orgy. Damn. How aren’t they jealous? I know I’d be jealous if you went snogging another girl.”

She sat on her bed.

“Yeah, I’d be the same, darling,” Tom said as he leaned down to kiss her. “Mmmm. I like snogging with you, sweetie.”

Lynette reached up and wrapped her hands around Tom’s neck and pulled him closer as they kissed. Tom leaned over and put a knee on the bed as they continued to kiss, their tongues wrestling each other’s. With a moan, Lynette leaned back, pulling Tom, who dropped next to her. She fumbled at Tom’s waist and unbuttoned the front, then pulled the zipper down. He helped her slide his shorts down and her hand closed over his erection. Tom moaned as she stroked him gently, then she began a steady jacking motion.

Tom broke their kiss to stammer out his impending eruption.

“Darling... gonna blow...”

“Hold on... not yet!”

Lynette sat up, yanked off his shorts, and pulled down his underwear, then dropped down to resume her kissing and stroking his shaft. Tom’s hips began jerking when she suddenly pulled herself away from their kiss and slid quickly down to take Tom’s penis into her hot mouth and

began sucking and licking its head. He cried out at the intense pleasure she was giving him, and when she began stroking him with her hand, as her mouth kept working over Tom's penis, he finally released.

Absolutely every muscle in Tom's entire body went rigid as he suddenly exploded into Lynette's pretty little mouth, pouring his hot throbbing jets of cum up into her loving mouth with a deep, passionate groan. Lynette drained her brother dry as she sucked, slurped, and stroked him until his throbbing jets turned to soft spasms. With a smile, Lynette swallowed Tom's warm sticky goo as Tom pulled her down for more kissing.

"Wow," Tom shuddered as he caught his breath. "Fuck, you must have been horny!"

"Yeah, all that snogging and groping in there. Heh. Glad we don't have a chaperone. Gonna have some frustrated kids down the hall..." Lynette giggled, then gasped as Tom caressed her inner thigh, sending chills running through her body as her eyes went closed.

Then he moved his hand up to her crotch and gently placed a finger on the slit between her two tight little lips and stroked it; then pushed through and tickled her between her inner lips. Lynette gasped and shuddered as she strained to keep her legs from clamping together.

Tom's finger continued to stroke in between her puffy little lips, and as he rolled over between her outspread legs, she opened them up even further. Now kneeling between her legs, he began worshiping her vulva with his hands, opening her lips to stroke around her leaking little canal. Lynette wailed her approval and threw her head back and screwed her eyes shut as he gently stroked his finger up and down inside her moist slit. He paused at her love button and she jerked and shuddered when he touched the hooded pearl.

"Oooooohhh... oh, darling... sooo good..." she moaned.

Tom ran his finger around and around the sensitive little organ, teasing it until the head popped out from its hood. Lynette was moaning, quivering, and gasping as he brought her through two orgasms, one quickly following another. He was rubbing around her clitoris as fast and as hard as he could. Lynette was now reaching her third orgasm but she was nearing exhaustion. She was screaming into deaf ears as she gyrated her hips into his hand trying to reach her climax.

Suddenly she could take no more and gasped at Tom to stop.

"Unh, Tom...! Aaahh, stop... too sensitive... uuhh... stoooooopp!"

Tom finally realized what was happening to his darling sister and stopped his assault on her hot little jewel; then he slid up to embrace her and kiss her passionately as she came down slowly from her orgasmic high. The two of them lay there on the bed for a while, completely spent and panting. They fell asleep that way, not waking until about 3:30 in the morning.

"Hey Tom!" Lynette hissed at him after she awoke. "Up! We need to mess up the other bed! They both need to look slept in!"

Tom groaned, sat up, and chuckled. "Yeah. That's right. Shit, that was awesome, darling. You're

a fantastic lover.”

They stripped the coverlet off the second bed and they both climbed in; after a loving kiss and hug, Tom spooned against Lynette and they fell asleep again. The siblings wouldn't get another chance to room together until later in the trip.

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Their trip through Europe was very rewarding. Their group visited museums, local art and folk-art fairs, concerts and bands, plays, dances, and craft shows. They stayed in small, quaint hotels, hostels, and larger hotels, too.

On the last week of the trip, just prior to the three-day stop in Paris, the group had a scheduled three-day, two-night hike in a natural area of France, near Grenoble in the French Alps. On the train from Italy to France, Dr Douglas gave the group a summary of the planned hike.

“Not all art and other beautiful sights and sounds are produced by humans,” he began. “A great source of artistic inspiration and some of the world's most beautiful imagery can be found in nature, so our next expedition will include a nature hike in the French Alps. We'll be visiting the Vercors Natural Regional Park next, this is the hike on our cultural sites itinerary. The park is a natural area and, as you all voted to do spring last at school, we'll be exploring it as closely as nature will allow, won't we.”

There was a chuckle from a number of kids and some winks were exchanged, puzzling Tom and Lynette, as Douglas continued.

“I'm passing out sheets which list the major landmarks we'll see on the hike together with your essay assignments for this site. You have a choice of writing two essays picked from the four options I've listed.”

He handed out the papers; Tom, sitting next to where Douglas was standing, got his first, read it, and blanched.

*The kids' chuckling—it can't be,* he thought. He raised his hand.

“Sir? These topics... they say... all about naked stuff... one is ‘Discuss how your appreciation of nature is enhanced or diminished by experiencing it while naked’; another is ‘Describe the differences in social interaction with other people while being naked compared with being dressed’; all of these themes are naked ones and...!”

“Yes, yes, Tom,” Douglas interrupted, and then speaking quietly to Tom, said, “Yes, we're to do the hike whilst naked. We had told your group that this park is a popular naturist area, and naked hiking is common there; that information was mentioned in the brochure about the park that was included in your packets. Then, spring last, a number of you pupils went to Mrs Douglas and asked about doing this hike whilst naked, didn't you. And then all of you voted to do it, so Mrs Douglas went and got approval from the school and your parents for us to get it sorted. That's what I was told—you don't recall that?”

Mrs Douglas spoke up, laying her hand on his arm. "Erm... wait, Eain, oh my, let me check the folder... Oh dear, I neglected to ensure that we obtained the hike consent form for the Armstrongs as they were a very late addition to the trip; they weren't attending the school this spring so they didn't participate in the voting for the naked hiking option. Tom, Lynette, is your doing the hike a problem? Would your parents object?"

Tom was speechless, shaking his head, unable to look at her.

Lynette interjected quietly, "It's a big problem. Can we speak privately?"

The adults glanced at Tom, who was white as chalk and looking quite ill. Lynette leaned over him and whispered, "It'll be all right, darling. I'll take care of this for us."

Tom nodded uncertainly. The other students were looking at him and the leaders with curiosity. Lynette took the teachers aside, out of the others' earshot, while the students began muttering to each other.

"So what's this, now?" Dr Douglas asked Lynette. "He doesn't want to get starkers? He can keep his kit on, then; two other pupils had some reservations but they were told that they could keep their kits on if they couldn't go through with the nude part. All the other pupils had no problem with their doing that. But a week before our tour began, both told Mrs Douglas that they'd go like the rest of the group and as well gave her their parents' permission letters. This is why the only essay topics I prepared have to do with nude hiking."

Lynette shook her head. "It's not that Tom doesn't want to hike naked; he panics if he even *sees* someone naked." She went on to briefly explain Tom's situation.

"Oh gracious," Mrs Douglas remarked. "What do we do? There's nowhere for him to stay whilst we hike!"

"And I'm not leaving him alone anyway," Lynette insisted. "We weren't told about this part of the trip, else we wouldn't have signed up. I don't do the nudity either. That's why we transferred schools to Norwich; no naked Program there."

Mrs Douglas looked thoughtful. "Wait, I have an idea," she said. "Our next stop is Paris, in three days. Couldn't we send these two on ahead? Eain, ring the School Cultural Tours & Excursions, dear, would you. We can put them on a Paris train at Grenoble and have Tours & Excursions set them up at the hotel. There should be another group in Paris they could join temporarily; I believe at least two other groups will be there this week since that's the last city for many groups, innit."

Dr Douglas nodded. "Excellent, dear. Brilliant in fact. But we must let the parents know and get their approval. We'll also need to get the trip budget sorted to adjust for this change, won't we?"

Mrs Douglas looked back at the other students. "We'll need to tell the others something so Thomas isn't embarrassed, won't we?"

"I know," Lynette said, "Tell them that Tom and I are very allergic to sun; we burn very badly

and sunscreen doesn't protect us very well. We didn't know that the hiking part was to be done naked or else we wouldn't have come on this tour and we'd feel terribly awkward—no, actually we would feel quite awful and stupid—if we were the only ones wearing clothes. And being clothed, we obviously would have no way to do your essays. And on such short notice, could you come up with four reasonable topics for us?" Lynette grinned.

Mrs Douglas gave her an admiring smile. "My dear, how very clever! That's a perfect explanation. Okay then, shall we end the children's suspense?" she asked, as she looked at the students who were whispering among themselves and trying to talk to Tom, who was mostly keeping to himself.

The leaders returned to the group and explained that the problem had to do with the siblings' sensitivity to the sun; Tom had once been badly burned and just learning now that the hike was to be done nude had scared him badly. Since there were no clothed essay topics prepared that Tom and Lynette could be set, they had agreed to skip the hike, travel on ahead, and would meet the group in Paris in three days.

The following hour was taken up with Mrs Douglas making the alternate arrangements with the tour company and contacting the siblings' parents; soon all was settled. Also settled was the siblings' tour group assignments while they were in Paris. Dr Douglas called them over after the new arrangements had been made.

"Now then. It's all been sorted. You'll be joining a group tomorrow morning; they will text the details of your meeting them to you by this afternoon or evening at the latest. That group is going to visit the Musée d'Orsay. Their painting collection is world-famous. I already have a museum art essay topic prepared from last year's tour which only needs a slight change to make it fit with our group's nude-hiking theme.

"Your essays, for both of you, are to review fifteen paintings of nude subjects or models and to answer these questions about each work: what do you believe the artist was attempting to portray by using a nude subject, and second, based on the appearance of the model, the facial expression, posture, or whatever other detail, deduce some things about the model, including how the model might have felt about posing for the artist. Use clues like where the model is gazing—whether the model's eyes are engaging the viewer or looking elsewhere. Also consider how your personal reaction to the overall painting or to the model, or both, would have been different if the model were completely clothed and discuss that issue too.

"I will expect the usual essay length. I'll text you a copy of these instructions directly, but I'll want you to be certain to include works by Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, Auguste Renoir, Jules Joseph Lefebvre, Édouard Manet, Alexandre Cabanel, William-Adolphe Bouguereau, and I'll especially want you to discuss *L'Origine du monde* by Gustave Courbet. And in addition, although these next two works I'll mention aren't in the Musée d'Orsay collection, I want you to consider discussing them too. First, if you recall, when we were in Frankfurt am Main at the Städel Museum, we viewed *Standing Nude with Hat* by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, and second, there's another nude wearing a hat, *Cupid Complaining to Venus* by Lucas Cranach the Elder,

which is back home at the National Gallery in London. You can search for images of these two on line and if you want, include a discussion of them as part of your fifteen subjects.

“On the Wednesday, you’ll accompany the same group to a concert they’re scheduled to attend and please write your essay on the topic to be set by that group leader. On the Thursday, a new group will arrive and you’ll join them for the day. I believe they’re attending a folk festival of some kind; but I’ll set no assignment, as you both will have completed two, as if you had stayed with us. You’ll rejoin our group when we arrive Thursday evening, won’t you.”

Tom and Lynette agreed; Tom had rapidly regained his composure after Mrs Douglas’ explanation of the siblings’ situation, and as soon as the two could grab a moment of being alone, Tom grabbed Lynette.

“Ohmygod, Linnie, you were amazing! You covered for me so well—but I wish that crap would stop already with my panicking over nudity. I love you so, so much!” he whispered to her and kissed her ear.

During the next hour, most of the others in the group came by to offer their expressions of regret over the siblings’ not being able to go on the hike, while Lynette, burning with curiosity, asked Roberta what this crazy naked hiking thing was all about.

“I thought you guys were so delighted to not have that damned naked Program at the school,” she asked, “so what the bloody F is going on here?”

Roberta chuckled. “Well, the cultural trip has always included a two or three-day nature hike in a remote forest preserve. Sometimes it’s in Germany or Austria; this year it’s in France. Anyway, when we got the materials for this trip and saw where the hike was, Diana had an idea. Her family always goes hiking in France and Germany when they’re on summer holiday and they always do these hikes whilst naked with their nudist group. She’s always raved about them and the photos she’s showed us are simply brill. And as well her boyfriend Damon’s family are all nudists—so those two dreamed up the idea for doing our cultural hike as a naked hike and sold it to everyone... um, almost everyone. Two kids dropped out rather than vote against it. They said they didn’t want to spoil it for everyone. You know how close everyone here is?”

Lynette nodded and Roberta went on.

“In the massage part of the Avery Program, lots of us wanted to be naked for that part but the school didn’t want to allow that. But it made almost all of us just want to be somewhere naked together; sharing ourselves that way feels so right. Anyway, two other kids weren’t thrilled about going naked, but decided that they’d go if they could keep the option of staying clothed; but a week before the trip, they both told us that they thought they’d be okay doing it starkers.”

Tom shivered slightly. “But we heard that all of you hated the idea of the Program ‘cause you didn’t wanna get naked with other kids! You guys even did that school revolt!” he exclaimed.

Roberta shook her head. “Erm... it’s not that way at all... it’s different. It’s not easy to explain ‘cause you didn’t do the Avery Program yet. All that weird naked Program rot—that was scary;

this is so different. We'll all be naked together, it's not like being the only starkers one and being groped. All of us kids are so close now—listen—I can't say too much about it, but remember, I told you at the beginning of the trip that we did that new Avery Program and had group sessions where we did all kinds of brilliant stuff together. Like I said before, part of it was massage sessions that were so ace that a lot of kids wanted to do it starkers; the teachers had to keep a lot of us from stripping off. The group sessions we did let our whole class bond and we love and trust each other totally. After that experience, being on a nude hike together will be bloomin' brilliant... It'll be awesome, and those photos Diana's shown us of her group's hikes... it looks so blindin' wicked."

Later, alone with Tom, Lynette commented quietly to him, "I still can't come to grips with how those kids are so accepting of group nudity, especially after hearing how they all united to oppose the naked Program."

Tom nodded, saying, "Makes me wonder what's behind that Avery thing. First group snogging and now group nudity. Maybe changing schools was a mistake?"

"I don't believe that. These kids are just so different from those at Barnet and St. George too. Did you ever feel like an outsider with the group?"

"No, never. They always included us and tried to make us feel part of the group."

"See? Also, everyone seemed so cool about us not going on the naked hike. No teasing us either, they were sincere, like they were really disappointed for us. They are so, so different from the kids at school last year!"

Tom shook his head and with a grin, said, "They're actually just disappointed that they won't get to see you starkers, you sexy doll."

Lynette punched his arm and countered, "Yeah, stud, I've seen how some of the gals've been checkin' you out—especially your butt—I mean arse, right? Glad we're not going on a naked hike; didn't want to have to start a cat fight over your sexy naked bod!"

They both chuckled.

At the Grenoble station, the siblings parted ways with their group, which left for the nature park in several small busses. Another vehicle in their convoy carried the group's hiking supplies including their tents, cooking gear, and food. Within the hour, Tom and Lynette boarded a train bound for Paris; they would have their dinner on the train.

They were met by an employee of the tour company at the Paris station and driven to the tour hotel. The tour employee told them that blocks of rooms had been reserved for all of the groups so that lodging them in Paris for the extra days hadn't been a problem; more rooms had been reserved than were needed because of several cancellations. Exhausted from the day of travel and the stress, the two went to their room and crashed.

But only about ten minutes later, Lynette's mobile beeped with a text from the leader of the group which they were to join for the next two days.

*Lynette and Tom, settled in your room yet?*

Lynette replied, *Yes*

*Excellent. Come meet us in the hotel meeting room lounge, second floor, take a right off the lift.*

She sighed. "C'mon, Tommie, duty calls. Need to meet our new group."

When they got to the lounge, they found eighteen teens and two adults chatting amiably together. When they entered the room, the teens from the new group surrounded the newcomers and began introducing themselves. Most of the members of this group came from the Birmingham area of central England, the West Midlands, and their trip concentration was on language exposure, traveling in France and Spain. These were their last two days, then they would be returning home. It took a little while for the siblings' ears to get accustomed to the flood of Brum dialect. Soon the leaders called for attention and beckoned Lynette and Tom over.

"Alroit, Tom an' Lynette Armstrong, cor? I'm Jason Swithart; I teach Spanish at St Mary's Academy in Birmingham an' this is my missus, Emilie. She's French, but we still get on."

She grinned. "So far. If he doozeent geet too uppety," she remarked in a fairly strong accented English.

Tom chuckled at her comment while the others smiled. Then Tom said, "*Mme Emilie, que faites-vous pour le faire se comporter correctement?*" [Mrs Emilie, what do you do to make him behave properly?]

"*Oh mon Dieu!*" she replied. "*tu parles si bien français, mais l'accent ... non, pas la france ... canadien?*" [My goodness! You speak French so well, but the accent... no, not France... Canadian?]

Tom grinned. "Got it in one, Madam. Sometimes the French think I'm making fun of them with my Québécois accent."

"*Non, non!* Your *français* ees quite good. I weesh you were weeth us longer."

Mr Swithart broke in. "Now that yow've properly bost Emilie—Lynette, do yo' speak French too?" he interrupted himself.

"Yes I do, and the two of us can get by in German as well," she answered, surmising that "bost" meant "impressed."

"That's bostin," he mused. "So yow two are rejects from the cultural tour group. Summat about not bein' able to do a three-day wilderness nature hike?"

"Yeah... Can't take the sun exposure we'd get in the French Alps," Lynette answered. "We didn't know about that part when we signed up. Seems it was a last minute decision to do that just before the trip was finalized and we came from a different school than the rest of the group and didn't get the info. We were able to get spots on the tour because two people dropped out—apparently they didn't want to do the nature hike after the rest of the group voted for it."

“Well then. Yow’re with our little group for the next two days, ay ya. Tomorrow it’s the Musée d’Orsay and your group leader texted me with your essay assignment. I must say, he’s set you a corker. Are all of his topics so... ah... unusual?”

Lynette shrugged. “Not till we got to the French Alps hike at the Vercors Park. Our tour group had voted to do it starkers, kind of a naturist-nature appreciation it seems, so the essays all had nudity as part of the theme. Tom and I had to bow out—as I said, we told them because of past severe sunburn problems—so it looks like he chose a topic for us that was related to the ones he set the rest of the group. Only ours has to do with museum art, not nature.”

“Oh my,” Mme Swithart exclaimed, “*oui*, I know of zat park; *c’est à la mode* weet Franch *naturiste* groups for hikes whilst *nu*.”

“Exactly,” Lynette agreed. “That’s what they told us, it’s a popular nude hiking site for naturist groups. So it seems our group had voted to do the three-day hike while naked. And the essays are supposed to be about describing their naked experience. I think one topic was something like, ‘Discuss whether your experience in a nature hike is made better or worse by doing it while naked.’ The other topics also had nudity in general or nudity in nature as a theme.”

“Cor, that’s a bit interesting, innit,” Mr Swithart mused. “You’ll ‘ave loads of art subjects to chat about from the museum in the mornin’. And on the Wednesday, we’ll be headin’ to a popular songs concert. Mostly French songs—we’ll want you lot to listen to ‘ow the language is used when singin’. The poetry, also ‘ow the language’s grammar sometimes changes, just like it does in English songs. Listen for the influences of English on the French, too. Alright, now, let’s go chat to the whole group; I’ll let you lot introduce yourselves first.”

The siblings returned to the group and listened to Swithart’s presentation on the museum and the topics he wanted his group to write about; then the group spent another half hour chatting before breaking up to go to their rooms.

Back in their room, Tom remarked to Lynette what he had noticed about the group.

“Really different group dynamic, right, Lynn timer? They’ve all kinda split into mostly same-sex couples and some threes. I only saw two boy-girl pairs.”

“Right. The Norwich group is kinda unique, it would seem. Say—I feel grimy from the train ride. Wanna shower? How about together?”

Tom grinned and reached for her. “Yeah, sweetie.”

“Wanna practice undressing me, brother?” Lynette asked huskily after they broke from their kiss.

“Un huh.” He took her top and pulled it over her head as she smiled broadly.

“Looks like the cure is still working,” she smirked, as Tom hooked his fingers in the waist of both her shorts and panties and slid them down off her hips.

Quickly both were naked and got into the shower, where Lynette grabbed the soap and began lathering Tom’s broad chest. She ran her hands over his abs and tweaked his nipples, then spun

him around and did his back, spending a lot of time on his butt and running her hands through his buttocks' cleavage. Reaching between his legs, she washed between his balls and anus and then grabbed his penis. Tom turned around and she grabbed it again as he pulled her into a searing kiss.

"God... you make me so fuckin' hot, Lynnie..." he gasped as she stroked him. He pulled away reluctantly. "Gotta wash you now."

Tom turned Lynette around and soaped up her back, then moved his hands down to her butt and spent time massaging and stroking her there, occasionally reaching between her legs and taking teasing strokes around her vulva. As he did, she wiggled her hips and moaned. Then Tom reached around Lynette and soaped up her breasts; she sighed and moaned again as a tingling sensation radiated from her nipples straight down to her groin. She turned her head and sought Tom's lips with her mouth. He spun her around and kissed her mouth.

"Oh darling, your lips and tongue are so delicious," she sighed.

Desire and need surged through Lynette. Tom kissed her neck, then her ear, then her chin. Lynette felt her lust, her need for her lover, beginning to surge out of control, as Tom took a nipple into his mouth. Lynette purred at the sensation. He licked around the nipple, then took the areola in his teeth and nipped, then ran his lips along the underside of her breast. Then he returned to her nipple, raking it with his teeth and did the same to her other nipple. Lynette's moaning increased in volume and put her hands on Tom's head while her breathing turned into sharp intakes of air as he nipped her areolas. Cupping both of Lynette's breasts, Tom captured her nipples between his fingers; then he bent down and sucked one, then the other, flicking them with his tongue.

She squealed. "Eeeehhh...! Oh! Oh!"

She reached down and grabbed Tom's erect penis and stroked it as he leaned over and shut off the water.

"Let's dry off and get in bed," he said in a husky voice.

They quickly dried each other and virtually leapt into the bed, Lynette pushing Tom down onto his back. Lynette raised up, then got on all fours and took him into her mouth, sucking his length halfway in and pressing her tongue against the bulging tube along the bottom of his shaft. Releasing his penis then, she licked it and swirled her tongue around its corona. Tom placed his hand on the top of her head and ran his fingers through her silky hair which was still fairly damp; then moved it to trace it down her spine to her butt. She purred as he moved his fingers to the crack of her buttocks and stroked her there, massaging her smooth round cheeks.

Lynette redoubled her sucking on his penis and continued working a hand up and down the shaft below her mouth. Then she raised up and climbed between his legs as he sat up, grabbed her torso, and pulled her down on his chest, wrapping her in a tight embrace as they passionately kissed.

Tom rolled Lynette off his chest and hoisted himself up onto his knees; then lightly ran his fingers over her upper body, caressing and exploring her breasts, her stomach, her neck, down her sides, over her pubic mound. Lynette's eyes were closed; she was breathing in long, slow, deep breaths, uttering barely audible "mmmmm" sounds, as she lost herself in the sensations Tom was creating. He bent down and planted a kiss on her belly, teased her belly button, then moved his lips to her pubic mound and licked the top of her slit. Lynette gasped and jerked, then languorously spread her legs.

Tom sat back and gazed at her vulva, smooth except for a neatly trimmed patch of hair at the top of her slit.

"Shit, Lynnie, you look so fantastic—gorgeous pussy too."

"Mmmmmm... all for you, stud..."

Tom fixed his eyes on her vulva, now so openly displayed. Lynette's lower lips had engorged and opened and now her pink inner skin lay exposed to his gaze. She was very aroused; her clitoris was engorged too and had poked out a bit from its surrounding tissue folds. Tom leaned over and lightly blew his breath across her vulva, making her jerk, then ran his fingertips around her inner lips, causing Lynette to gasp and shudder.

He carefully pushed one finger inside her vagina and bent down, flicking her clitoris with the tip of his tongue. He gently worked his finger in and out, gradually stretching the opening in her partially obstructing membrane, as he stroked the front wall of her vagina. Then he touched that bumpy section of her g-spot inside her secret passage and Lynette grunted and bucked her hips.

"Uuunnn...aahhh..." she exclaimed. "Tommie... ooohh it's good... Tommie..."

She lifted herself up and embraced him, tucking her face into the angle between his neck and shoulder and whispered, "Tommie, lover...?"

"Yes, my love?" he murmured.

"I've been safe for a while now ... enough time ... the pill ... Can we... now...? I need you in me... at last... I'm ready... love me, brother..." she whispered into his ear.

"Damn... sis... You sure?"

"Never more sure... love you so hard it hurts in my throat, darling... Just *LOVE* me, no, *FUCK* me till I pass out!"

Tom was surprised by the intensity of her reply and looked at her with awe.

"But can I be on top?" she asked timidly. "I'm still a little scared about the pain... please?"

"Oh god, sure, darling. I'd never want to hurt you."

"Lay down, sweetie," Lynette commanded, her take-charge attitude reasserting itself.

She swung around on the hotel bed and knee-walked forward to straddle Tom's groin. He

reached up to hold her hips to steady her, thinking about how short and slight she seemed to be from this angle, hovering over him, compared to his large frame. Tom looked up at her; her face wore a determined expression but her body seemed to glow with passion; her vulva brushed his thigh and left behind a smear of wetness. Clearly she was extremely aroused. Tom shuddered as he glanced at her vulva.

*Shit, I'm gonna fuck my gorgeous step-sister, he thought. I never imagined this could ever happen.*

As Lynette settled over his hips, Tom reached up to her delightful, perky breasts and tweaked her nipples.

“Oooohh, stop that, Tom! You’re distracting me!”

Lynette, now perched in place over Tom’s groin, grabbed his penis and ran its head through her vulval slit, using it to part her labia, and wiggled it against her clitoris. Both teens moaned at the sensation. Then she moved his penis backwards, wetting its head in the juices leaking out into her vulva, and then she aligned him with the little dark hole wetly awaiting it between her glistening inner lips.

Closing her eyes, Lynette moved down a bit, socketing the penis’s head at the entrance to her vagina and sighed.

“Aaahhh, my darling, now we’ll become one at last... Hope this doesn’t hurt too bad...”

Carefully she lowered her crotch down, wedging Tom’s iron-hard organ between their groins, and he felt the pressure as its head parted the lips at her vagina’s entrance and pressed against her remaining maidenhead. Tom watched intently where they were becoming joined as she kept pressing down, watching as his penis eased inside her lips. Her inner lips parted as the mouth of her vagina opened up around him and he felt a tight ring begin to slide around his penis’s head, while a slick, wet heat began to envelop it. He resisted a powerful urge to thrust upward as he stared with love at Lynette’s face.

“Ooooffff... mmmmm,” she muttered. “So far it’s good... Only stings a bit... Here it goes...”

She lifted slightly, then pressed firmly down. There was a brief resistance, a stretchy feeling on his crown, a sharp twinge of something giving way, and suddenly Lynette slid a couple of inches down his length.

“Eeeppp... ow! Owie ouch! Woooohh... oh shit, you’re in me!” she gasped as she took another inch into herself before stopping.

Then she took a deep breath, pulled up a bit and pushed down again. Tom watched in awe as his step-sister bore down onto his rigid organ and it felt like his whole consciousness, his entire being, had become centered in his penis. Sensations like he’d never felt before assaulted him as Lynette’s vagina engulfed him and his penis slowly disappeared inside her. Her channel was tight, so tight, and hot, and soaking wet, making it easily slick enough to let her impale herself fully on him. Then their groins met as his penis became fully embedded inside her.

“Oooff...” Lynette panted, her eyes closed. “Shit. Feels like I’m stuffed. So damned big. Are you in me all the way?”

Tom looked at where they were joined. Lynette’s lovely, wet heat had enveloped his entire length. Then he watched as a tiny crimson-tinged rivulet appeared in the copious juices leaking from his lover’s crotch onto his groin.

“Yeah, darling. You okay? Did it hurt at all?”

“I’m good; there was a sharp sting, but... unh... wait... don’t move yet. Let me try this...”

Lynette wiggled her hips, raised up an inch, and pushed down again. Tom noticed her outer lips folding in as his penis again forced its way into her super-tight channel. He groaned at the sensation of the tightly clamping pressure as Lynette twisted and gyrated her hips as she lowered herself.

Suddenly the incongruous thought popped into his head: *She’s screwing me!* as Lynette began undulating her hips and curved her spine—and then she stopped with Tom’s penis fully socketed inside her again, his pubic hair again pressed into Lynette’s groin.

“Oh god!” both teens gasped.

“You’re so fuckin’ tight!” Tom panted, his brain overloaded with sensation.

“Uuuunnhh... bro, another inch and you’d be in my throat! I’m *SO* full!”

She pulled up tentatively a few inches and pushed down again.

“Oh wow!” both chorused.

“Again!” Tom urged.

She raised herself until only the head of Tom’s penis was inside her, then squealed as she slid back down, reveling in the sensation as his organ again filled her incredibly tight channel. Her vaginal walls massaged Tom’s penis—not only was she incredibly tight, her vaginal muscles were throbbing from the friction his organ was creating as it slid into her. Then slowly, Lynette began raising and lowering herself and both began sighing with pleasure at the sensations radiating from their groins. She picked up her speed. She was in awe; this felt *SO GOOD!*

Lynette pushed herself forward, placing her hands on the bed above Tom’s shoulders as she pressed her breasts against Tom’s chest. She was working her hips, up and down, swivelling around, and repeating the motion, again and again. Her rigid, erect nipples were making little circles on Tom’s broad chest. Her head, surrounded by a halo of her silky hair, hung just above Tom’s. Her face wore a triumphant, gleeful smile.

“We did it, stud. We got each other’s cherries. This feels heavenly... glorious...”

“Mmmppfff... it’s... shit, so incredible... if I’d known it felt so good...”

“Yeah... we could’ve been doing this for *months!*”

“Uuuupppff... aahhh... but you only got safe this month...”

The two stopped any more talking and just concentrated on their sensations and making love. Then Lynette sat back up, put her hands on Tom's broad chest, and started rocking to and fro on his erection, thrusting her hips front to back. This was a new sensation for both as it stimulated Lynette's clitoris as it rubbed against Tom's pubic bone and rocked his shaft against her g-spot, while it pulled Tom's penis up and down, making him frenzied with lust. Lynette's face shone with the pleasure radiating from their linked bodies.

Tom shoved his hips up into her with each of Lynette's forward rocking movements. After only a few dozen seconds of this, she was gasping with her mouth hanging half open, eyes glazing over, head bobbing back and forth, and breasts jiggling on her chest. Tom was mesmerized at the sight, and forgetting his own building lust, reached down to the juncture of their bodies, found her swollen clitoris, and put his thumb on its hood where he pressed in and moved the skin there in small tight circles.

Lynette shuddered and cried out, “Gaaaahhhhh...”

Her fingers tightened on Tom's chest, digging into his skin; her face was flushed and her body was shaking. She stopped moving and her face and body froze in ecstasy as her entire body spasmed. Tom felt her vagina throb and pulse and the increased pressure was almost painful. He reached up and pulled her down to his chest, raised his knees—lifting Lynette's hips up—and began thrusting his loins upward into her. His penis was driving up into her, thrusting in and out, pistoning into her delightful, hot, tight, and wet vaginal channel, and it felt like a rod of fire to him; pulses of intense pleasure shot along its length, through his groin, then surged through his body.

Lynette was panting heavily now; sweat was pouring off her body, now flushed with passion. Her arms were held tightly against Tom's chest, using them for leverage to try to rock her hips back and forth on the rigid rod which was repeatedly impaling her. She bore down onto Tom's hips and squirmed, attempting to force him to work his shaft deeper into her. Yet another orgasm overwhelmed her and she threw her head back and gasped, eyes rolling up in their sockets. Her arms went slack and fell away from Tom's chest; her mouth fell open as she limply lay on his chest. Tom pounded up into her several more quick strokes and she went rigid again.

“Aaaaaarrrrggg... eeeeyyyyyh...” she squealed breathlessly.

Lynette had come again in a quick, intense orgasm which left her panting, trying to catch her breath.

Tom's balls were churning with lust now as he felt the telltale signs of imminent orgasm. With a great grunt, he wrapped his arms around Lynette and rolled her over on her back. He reached under her and grasped her buttocks, pulling her pelvis into his. Then he began pounding into her with powerful strokes, exhaling sharply with each inward thrust.

Quivering under the pounding, Lynette moaned and her body shuddered; suddenly her muscles grew tense and her fingers grasped his back and dug in as yet another orgasm swept through her

body.

“Unh, unh, unh, oh I love it... fuck me... unh, unh...” she chanted as she chased yet another orgasm.

Tom was panting like an exhausted racehorse, so he slowed his pace from fast and shallow to long and deep, giving his body the desperately needed time to catch his breath. In response, Lynette began moving her own pelvis in perfect synchrony with his. With his thrusting slowed, he became aware of the sounds they were making, the grunts of their heavy breathing, Lynette's little coos with each of their thrusts, and the wet squishy sound of his penis sliding inside her. His lust was being stoked by the sensations flowing from every nerve ending on his penis as it slid home into his lover with each thrust.

Tom's body was on fire as he chased his own orgasm. He increased his pace, his shaft plunging in and out of his sister, who was moaning and whimpering, completely overcome with her passion. She gasped and almost came again while trying to drive her hips upward into Tom's thrusts. With a shock which he felt running up his spine, he began to feel his cum boiling behind his balls.

Suddenly Lynette gasped again and her vaginal muscles throbbed around Tom's penis like a pulsing vise. She squealed, reached down, grabbed his butt, and pulled him hard into her groin. Her body quivered and vibrated; her vaginal walls clamped down on Tom's penis in a vise-like grip.

Tom was stroking in and out of Lynette's spasming and tightly gripping vagina with short, quick thrusts now, right on the threshold of his own orgasm, as Lynette climaxed, and he knew his own climax was imminent. He felt it spreading from his groin; it was a rushing feeling permeating his bowels and it felt like his ball sack was tightening against his perineum as if his testicles were trying to suck themselves into his body. Tom groaned and, unable to hold back any longer, let himself go as he felt a burning sensation begin, radiating from a point near his anus. His penis stiffened even more and swelled as his cum pulsed through it, spurting hard in a number of pulses, as he filled his sister with a copious load of his thick cream.

“Uuuuhhhh, cumming...!” he gasped as he stiffened and pumped jet after jet of cum into her body. “Uhn, unh, unh...! aaaahhh...!”

“Meeeee... tooo... aaahhhhh...!” Lynette choked.

She shuddered and panted as her vagina pulsed over and over, clamping tightly on Tom's penis, rippling and spasming as a series of orgasmic pulses tore through her body. Shuddering again in ecstasy, she locked her heels into the back of Tom's thighs, grinding herself into Tom's erection as her vaginal muscles pulsed and spasmed, trying to milk the cum from Tom's penis as he pumped the last jets into her. As the aftershocks of her powerful orgasm receded, her legs fell away from Tom's hips and her arms dropped to the bed.

Tom, sweat pouring off his brow, looked down at his lover. Her eyes were closed and her chest was heaving. Then with a sucking pop, he felt his penis slip out of her tight hole followed by a

small gush of fluids. He looked down at the mixture of sperm and vaginal secretions, tinged a deep pink in places. He rolled off of her to her side.

“Darling? Linnie, are you there?”

He shook her gently. Her moan was barely audible.

“Are you okay, sweetie?”

“Mmmmm... more than okay... that was awesome... soooo good...” she sighed.

“You zoned out for a couple seconds.”

“Mmmmm, yeah... that felt amazing... way better than when you lick me. Was it good for you, darling?” she asked languorously.

“Never felt anything as amazing as that, lover. Shit, you were a sex demon! You went totally wild, you know. I felt your lust just smothering me.”

She giggled. “You so fuckin’ turned me on in the shower. I was so hot I couldn’t think straight. And there really wasn’t any bad pain—all I remember is a sharp sting, a pinch. Ha, Mom told me that breaking my cherry wouldn’t be so bad if I had lots of foreplay—*oh!*—you did what she said would help from having much pain!”

“Huh? What did I do?”

“Pushing your finger in me like that. Stretching my cherry a little. Mom said it would help. It did. I was gonna tell you to try that when we were gonna make love for the first time but I got too carried away to remember.”

“Oh! I remembered about the g-spot. Supposed to make a girl feel good, so I was trying that. When I touched you there once before, it really set you off, like this time.”

“Yeah, I think I remember your touching that place in me—yeah, did that ever set me off! When you rubbed me there this time, suddenly I had to have your cock inside me so bad! Ooohhh! *Wow!*” She jumped.

“What?” Tom said. “You okay?”

*Giggle.* “Yeah... I felt a little gush leak out below and got a tiny orgasm from it. God, I’m tingling all over! Damn, I’m so wet!”

She felt her crotch.

“Shit, I’m soaked. So’s the bed. Need a shower again, stud. *Alone.* You’ll get your turn afterward, but I think the playground is closed for the evening; I’m kinda sore down there now. Jeez, you really pounded me!”

After showering, the two climbed into the room’s other bed and, spooning, fell into a deep sleep.

## Chapter 14

The remainder of the summer program was uneventful. The siblings spent the rest of the week in Paris with their two temporary groups, then they met their original group for the remaining planned activities. Soon it was time to return to London; but now Tom and Lynette had made friends with a number of kids from the other two groups and planned to keep in touch. They were also very pleased to learn that the essays that they had written on the trip would receive class credit toward their year eleven school work.

While Tom and Lynette were on their summer program, their parents had located a home to purchase in Dulwich Village, an affluent community in the Borough of Southwark, much closer to the siblings' new school. They would move when their lease on their first home was up. Since Andrew was going to live in a university residence, there was no reason to remain living in North London—Duncan had a distance to commute no matter which suburb they lived in, and the new home would be a slightly shorter and easier trip for him.

Just before they were to move, Tom's family traveled to Canada for a week, visiting relatives in Toronto. Then the summer holidays were over and Tom and Lynette were about to begin in their new school, Norwich Academy. They were entering their year eleven and were excited about it. Their fellow group members on their summer course had been quite complimentary about both the school and the new Avery Program, which was being developed and pilot-tested at Norwich. It had started at the school the previous January and all of the school's year nines and most of the year tens had participated in it. This fall, a teachers' training program was being conducted at the school and a number of teachers from secondary schools around the U.K. were now observing and interning in the Avery sessions to learn its techniques because it was going to replace the widely reviled Naked in School Program.

The siblings' new home was located about two miles from the school, an easy bike ride. With their parents' permission, the two had begun to sleep together in Lynette's room since she had a larger bed, but they would keep their two rooms to maintain appearances when the kids' friends visited.

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On their first day of school, they spent most of the time registering and getting their books, uniforms, and supplies; then they had an introductory assembly, and finally an activities fair where they learned about the school's clubs and other extracurricular activities. They also found out that they wouldn't be in any classes with the members of their summer course group since those students had already done the Avery Program. They learned that the school wanted that year eleven group maintained intact as a separate cohort for research purposes to see how their personal dynamics developed.

Instead, Tom and Lynette were told that for their own Avery Program session, they would be grouped with other students of both years ten and eleven who had missed taking the course last spring and other year eleven students who were newly starting at Norwich, like the siblings. The program would begin for them in two weeks and was scheduled as a three-period block for five

days over two school weeks. Scheduling these groups was a complicated process since the school also had to accommodate their academic classes too.

Tom and Lynette were also scheduled to participate in the school's chorus and they were put in a music class which concentrated on vocal performance. There were also physical education classes; but the Avery Program substituted for the P.E. classes during the weeks it ran.

When the siblings tried to connect with their friends from the summer program, that's when they learned that they had no academic classes together. Of the whole summer group, they only shared their lunch period with Roberta and Simon. Lynette had become a close friend of Roberta's during the summer program and Tom and Simon had also connected as friends during that time, especially since Tom learned that Simon was on the school's cross-country team.

Two days after school began, Lynette was sitting with Roberta at lunch when she learned some news about Harry and Julie, two other members of their summer course group. Roberta had been chatting with Lynette while Tom was with Simon elsewhere in the lunchroom where Simon was introducing Tom to some of his other friends.

"So did you hear about Harry and Julie from our summer program?" Roberta asked.

Lynette shook her head. "Hear what?" She grinned. "They're not engaged, are they?"

"Ha! No, not yet—yeah, they could be—they're really a committed couple. But that's not the news." Roberta chuckled. "The news is that I just heard that they were made Avery Program mentors this term. That's unusual; last year they only picked sixth-formers."

"Um, that's good, I guess. Remember, I'm not familiar with the Avery Program—we didn't have it in our old school. I heard a little about mentors this summer with you guys; they're the kids who help the teachers and work with anyone who needs help doing the activities?"

Roberta nodded. "Yep. They pick for mentors the blokes who can work good with others—you know, like leader-types, ones with charisma, things like that. I'm happy for them; it's an honor, I guess."

Lynette chuckled. "I can see where Julie would fit, Harry too. She was always organizing things and Harry's a born negotiator. He was wonderful at getting people to compromise—incredibly persuasive. Remember when he got some of the guys to agree on the room assignments?"

"Yeah," Roberta agreed, recalling his negotiating a disagreement over rooms during the summer program. "Also Julie and Harry were brill during our Avery Program in April, they were real cheerleaders in our group. We were one of the first year ten groups to do it and they really helped a number of our classmates who were having trouble with some of the problem-solving sessions and they did a fantastic job when we did the role-playing."

Lynette looked thoughtful. "Yeah, this summer you mentioned the role-playing and um... problem-solving. The Avery Program takes two weeks! Three class periods a day. That's a lot of time—and you never told me what do you do in there, even when Tom and I asked."

“Lynette, we’ve been told over and over, never to tell anyone what happens in the sessions ‘cause what we’re doing is solving puzzles as a group. If we tell about it, it’ll spoil it for others. And the other sessions, well, you’ve just gotta do them, they’re ace. Lots of fun. I don’t want to spoil your surprise. Actually the whole program is, um, it’s one and a half hours a day, ten days—that’s only fifteen hours long. We do the bonding exercises a lot and almost everyone gets to pair up with each other. I told you a little about the bonding before, right?”

Lynette nodded, “Yeah.”

Roberta continued, “Okay. That’s where you make close connections with the other kids. The problem-solving stuff is way cool; it’s a group activity and that’s all I can say. Anyway, we did that for several days, there’s a lot of physical activity and some of the games are super hard physically but really fun. And the role playing we did was corkin’ brill. It was about gossip and slander and the damage it can do to reputations and relationships. Oi—another thing we learned was how to resist peer pressure to avoid doing something dumb. Also about setting sexual limits if someone was too pushy. And I told you that even had these ace massage sessions! The boys did girls and we did the boys. That also was brill and we learned how to give pleasure with our hands with no sex needed! I told you before the nature hike that doing the massages felt so brill that lots of us wanted to do it starkers, but the teacher nixed that idea. I love everyone in my group now, they’re almost like family.”

“Wow, you sound like an advert for the Avery Program, Roberta,” Lynette laughed. “Now I’m all charged up; it’ll be interesting to see how I’ll like it. Also I think Tom might like it; he’s kinda handsy, you know,” she giggled.

“Handsy? How’s Tom handsy?—he’s very sweet and polite.”

“Well, I didn’t mean he was rude handsy, you know. Tom’s very affectionate; he loves to hug and kiss people in my family, and I’ve seen him hugging the guys on his track team in our last school, you know, man hugs celebrating a good run.”

“Tom does track? That’s cool. So does Simon. Cross-country, not the short track races. Tom’s a hunk, you know. If I didn’t have Simon, I’d have my sights set on him,” Roberta giggled.

Later Lynette told Tom about her conversation with Roberta.

“Well, that really does a lot to explain all the affectionate partner-swapping this summer,” he chuckled. “You got more info from her than we could get out of her or anyone else this summer about that program.”

“I think Roberta was being expansive, honey. We’ve become real friends now. She told me that everyone in the program is warned not to talk about specific things they do in the classes. It’s so that the new people doing it don’t have any preconceived notions or know the answers to the puzzles they do. I think she might have told me a bit more than she should have done. Oh, she thinks you’re a hunk, too. If Simon dumps her she might make a play for you.”

“Ha, fat chance. First, I think Simon is head over heels about her; second, like that old song, I

only have eyes for you, baby,” Tom sniggered.

“You’re so sweet,” she grinned at him.

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The first two weeks of school were busy but not especially eventful, except for the discussions which ensued after Tom presented his letter explaining that he had to be exempted from changing and showering with other students. That resulted in a brief meeting with Tom, the deputy head teacher, and the counselor. Tom pointed out that his file contained medical recommendations about his phobia and he explained how his former school had accommodated him. Tom signed up for the school’s track team to do cross-country and learned that sport would fulfill his P.E. requirement. He liked the arrangement because he could schedule his workouts with other team members and would have his needed privacy when changing.

The siblings’ participation in the Avery Program began two weeks into the term. The classes were held in a modified classroom which had a one-way glass observation window in a wall to allow observers to watch the class to learn the Avery techniques without distracting the students. On one side of the room, shielded by a screen, there was a small area where students needing individual help from the mentors could stay out of sight from the rest of the group. When their program week began, the students were told to come to the room wearing their P.E. costumes, but had received no other instructions.

Tom and Lynette walked into the special Avery Program room and looked around. They immediately recognized Julie and Harry, the kids from their summer program, and waved to them. Julie was passing out cards; she came over to them.

“Wotcher, you guys. It’s brill that you’re in my group; me and Harry are the group mentors. Here’s your number cards. You’ll need them later.”

Tom took one. He noticed his card was blue and Lynette’s was red. “What are these for?” he asked.

“Groupings. You’ll see. Just pick a mat and sit. Lynette, you sit on one of the light yellow squares painted on it and Tom, sit on a yellow oval.”

The siblings sat on a nearby mat. They noticed each mat also had red and blue circles stenciled on them in a regular pattern.

Harry and Julie were arranging the seating of the other students as they arrived in the room and in a few minutes, all the mats were occupied and everyone was looking around with curiosity.

Then two adults entered and the chatter in the room subsided.

“Hi, team,” the man called. “I’m Mr Tolliver, and I’ll be one of your guides for this exploration of your personal development. Miss Gunson’s your other guide. From now on, we’ll all be a big, happy team. Assisting us, you’ve already met Harry and Julie; they’ll be our group mentors. If you don’t already know what a mentor does, here’s a quick idea. First, they’ll assist us by

demonstrating some of the positions we'll use in our exercises, and second, they'll help any of you who might need some extra coaching as we go along. But you all knew that already, didn't you?"

There was a chorus of "Yes sir."

Miss Gunson now began speaking. "You also all probably know that the version of the Avery Program we're doing in this session was developed right here at Norwich Academy and two of its developers are still pupils here, Amelia Hadad and Jeremy Porter. They're actually national celebrities, don't you know. They were knighted by the Queen earlier this year for their Avery Program contributions."

There was a murmur of admiration from the class.

She went on. "Now this session will cover ice-breaking and personal bonding. Part of this exercise is to tear down the personal barriers we all put up when we're interacting with people outside our families—not that there are any families where barriers exist between close relatives, are there?"

Chuckling from the group.

"Many parts of this exercise are quite intense, as I'm sure you've heard, but everyone doing it in the past has said how rewarding it was for them. Isn't that true, Julie and Harry?"

Harry nodded emphatically. "It was brill! All of our group who did it in the spring are very close buddies, right, Julie?" She nodded. "They're even closer to me than my own cousins and maybe even my own sister. But she's only twelve and thinks she rules the house."

Everyone laughed.

Miss Gunson chuckled. "Very apt endorsement, Harry. Now, in addition to the group bonding exercises, the other elements of the program include the development of various social skills such as team building for joint, cooperative problem solving and trust-building, and we'll employ role-playing to demonstrate how damaging gossip and rumor-mongering can be to trusting relationships. We'll teach the girls—boys too—how to set your personal limits for intimate contact. And show you all how to use the sense of touch to give your partners pleasure in a non-sexual way."

Mr Tolliver moved into the center of the mats and pointed around at the four mats containing the seated students.

"So let's start with this little exercise. Everyone, you're sitting on a yellow square or oval now, so turn on your mats so that you face inward toward the mat's center; that will arrange you all into a circle, alternating boy-girl. Now take the hands of your teammates on each side of you. All set? Good. I want one person from each mat to start telling your teammates your name and age, then the next person to the right takes a turn."

The room was filled with murmuring voices and then gradually went silent as the circles were

completed.

Mr Tolliver spoke again. "Well done, everyone; very orderly. I like that. I'll take as read that you all gave the correct answers, too, didn't you?"

There was a flurry of giggling at the comment.

"Okay," he said, "let's try something more difficult, or perhaps more controversial, won't we. With the same person starting off, tell your teammates the name of your favorite *FOOTBALL* team! And no arguing!"

The entire class cracked up. Everyone knew how polarizing football could be to British fans. This time the noise in the room was considerably louder, but soon died down.

Mr Tolliver clapped his hands to restore full quiet. "Well, now we know which teams are the most popular at Norwich, don't we. And we all must be good mates already. Nobody tried to clobber their neighbor, then."

There was loud laughter throughout the room.

"Okay, that was pretty lame. You're all doing great." Then Tolliver held up a blue card. "See this card? You got one like it from Harry or Julie. Find your card."

The kids dug out their cards.

"There's a number on each card. If you look at each mat, in the center you'll see a number painted there. Mats are numbered one through four. Go to the mat which matches your number and sit down on a colored circle matching your card color."

Tom looked at his card. Blue four. He glanced at Lynette's. Red two. Her mat was on the opposite side of the room from his. He shrugged and walked to the number four mat.

Elsewhere in the room there was some laughing and some uncomfortable shifting around as the kids settled onto their new places.

As Tom sat down, he noticed the red circle next to his blue one was only about a foot away. He pulled away from the red circle to about three feet as a girl he didn't know tentatively knelt on her red circle and looked at him questioningly.

"Now boys and girls. Sit on your circles. No, not behind them, *ON* them—get closer, closer... ah, over there, mat four, son, you need to get on the blue circle," Tolliver told Tom.

Tom slid over and sat sideways, legs out, his right shoulder facing the girl, as Tolliver was continuing, "... good, now facing each other, take each other's hands in your own and look at your teammate; this is your new partner for now."

Tom turned to face the girl and backed away to arm's length from her. He became terribly uncomfortable when he noticed the girl had stretched her hands out to him. He came up on his knees, leaned forward, and stretched out his arms across the space between them and lightly gripped her fingers near the tips. He barely heard the next instruction; his mind was whirling.

“Now girls first, then boys, introduce yourselves as you did a few minutes ago when we were in those circles and this time tell your partner something about yourself...”

The rest was lost. He vaguely heard her name, Marjorie something, then something about a sister and... was it a music group she named? It didn't make any sense to him. Then the girl hissed at him and wiggled his hands.

“Tell your name and something about you!” she prompted.

“Err, Tom Armstrong. My sister's Lynette...” he choked out, whispering.

“Why can't you sit closer?” Marjorie urged.

He didn't respond; just shook his head. Meanwhile the teacher had resumed speaking.

“Now, both girls and boys, get nice and close to each other, then close your eyes and keep them closed. I want the girls first, take both of your partner's hands in yours; touch them all over—stroke their palms, fingers, wrists, backs. Get to know your partner's hands. Run your fingers and palms all over them, as much as you want, and try to memorize how they feel.”

Marjorie reached out and tried to pull Tom closer so she could hold his hands; when he didn't move, she tried to shift herself closer but he pulled away. Annoyed, she dropped his hands and looked around for some help. Meanwhile, Tom shifted from his kneeling posture to a sitting one, twisting sideways to her, and looked down at his feet.

He thought in anguish, *What's wrong with me? I can't do this!*

He was only faintly aware that Miss Gunson had knelt next to him and was trying to get his attention.

“Son? Young man? What's your name?” she was whispering.

Marjorie had come closer and whispered, “Miss? I think it's Tom something. I'm Marjorie.”

Gunson nodded. “Tom? Look at me.”

Tom, in a fog, looked over at her and shook his head. “I can't do this, Miss,” he said miserably.

“All you need to do, Tom, is hold her hands,” Gunson urged. “Come on, let's try.”

Tom shifted to a kneeling position with his knees and shins on the mat and sitting back on his heels. He reached out to Marjorie, who was at arm's length, took her hands, and closed his eyes.

“Good,” Gunson praised him. “Now let her feel your hands; did you hear the instructions?”

Tom shrugged, and stayed knelt, stiffly, while Marjorie caressed his hands. After about a minute, Tom's shaking hands became apparent to Marjorie.

“Tom, are you nervous?” she asked.

“Anxious,” Tom muttered. “Hate how this feels.”

Then Tolliver told the group to switch; the boys were to feel the girls' hands. Tom screwed his eyes closed and gripped Marjorie's hands but just continued to kneel, holding her hands.

"Tom! You're supposed to be feeling them all over!" she hissed at him.

He was kneeling there, body rigid, oblivious to the sounds of little sighs of pleasure surrounding him as the others in the room reacted to the hand-stroking.

Marjorie pulled her hands away in frustration.

"Tom, can't you follow instructions?" she whispered sharply.

She looked at him; he was pale and breathing hard.

"Trying..." he grunted. "Really trying."

Then the teacher's voice interrupted. "Your eyes are still closed, everyone. Keep holding your partner's hands. Boys, still with your eyes shut tightly, no one peek!—tell your partner something about what you noticed about her when she sat on your mat. What she's wearing, about her hair, or if you can't remember, tell her how her hands feel."

Marjorie knee-walked a little closer and took Tom's hands again.

"Tom?" she prompted.

"Um... I didn't notice anything, sorry," he muttered.

She dropped his hands again, scowling in annoyance, as the whispering sounds of other couples' speaking flowed around them, then gradually died down. The teacher spoke again.

"Good job, boys. Now you girls get to tell your partners something about them."

"Tom, you're such a knob, you're not cooperating at all," Marjorie scolded quietly. "You're a selfish, unhelpful... no, *strange* bloke and this experience is becoming quite horrid."

Tom, with a shrug, sat back down on the mat, legs stretched out in front of him while Marjorie knelt on her circle, now at his side, stewing, until the susurration of voices began to quiet.

Tolliver spoke again. "Very good, everyone. Now Julie and Harry will demonstrate how you'll sit for the next part."

The two came up and sat on a small mat in the room's center. They shifted around until they sat with their legs spread apart, Julie's legs lying across the top of Harry's thighs. Their upper bodies were almost touching and their forearms were resting on each other's shoulders, their upper arms touching along their lengths, as they looked into each other's eyes.

Tolliver instructed the group, "They're sitting this way because it's important in the next part to listen to your partner's breathing so that you'll breathe together. Now, everyone, let's move to sit like Julie and Harry."

When Marjorie moved closer to Tom, intending to sit with him as the mentors had demonstrated,

Tom shifted away again and Marjorie shouted angrily, "Tom!"

The others in the room stopped moving and looked over at Tom's mat while Miss Gunson and Julie hurried over.

"Tom, I've been watching you," Gunson said, "hoping that you'd start showing a bit of enthusiasm. But you're not making any effort. Why won't you work with Marjorie?"

"Don't know... why... this... stuff's making me, um... so anxious... unh, I can't... do it. I don't... it's supposed... to make me feel... what?—something—closeness, like I heard?"

"That's right, Tom," Gunson nodded.

"Well, it's... not working—I only feel bad... afraid!"

"Can you just sit and let Marjorie sit close to you with your arms on her like the mentors are doing?" Gunson urged.

She motioned Marjorie to move closer and took Tom's arm and prompted him to turn to face her.

"No, I can't," Tom grunted, shook her hand off, and then stood and began walking quickly to the door.

A flurry of confusion followed as Lynette looked up, saw that Tom was headed out of the room, leaped to her feet, and rushed after him. She was followed by Julie, who caught up to the two just outside the door. Meanwhile everything in the room had stopped; everyone was staring at the scene with open mouths.

Outside, Lynette was trying to calm a clearly distressed Tom while Julie was trying to get their attention. A minute later, Miss Gunson came out.

"Julie? What's happening?" she asked. "Tom? What's wrong, son?"

Lynette answered, "Tom's got some kind of anxiety problem, but this kind of thing hasn't happened before, Miss."

Tom shook himself. "I don't know what came over me, Miss. I kinda blanked out in there. Being so close to someone I don't know... it really... scared me. It felt bad, wrong, doing that stuff. I couldn't think straight and all I wanted was to get out of there."

Gunson frowned. "Do you think you can go back and have Julie work with you in private instead of Marjorie?"

Tom looked at Julie, then away. "Um, no... couldn't. Sorry, Julie. I like you but... holding hands, maybe, but the part that came next ... so close... leaning our bodies together like that, embracing you... aagghhh! No, never... I couldn't..."

Miss Gunson continued, "What if there was no hugging and embracing, just hand-holding and quiet talking? Could you try that?"

Tom thought for a few seconds. "Maybe. I'll try."

“Lynette?” Gunson turned to her. “We’ve already shifted your partner to Marjorie so we have no one for you to work with except Harry but he’s occupied with mentor tasks.”

“Can I stay with Tom? We’re really close. Maybe it’ll help him.”

“Hmmm... This is beyond any of the Avery protocols now... Well, why not? Can’t do anything worse than what’s already happened, can we. Let’s go back, but we’ll use the side door. The rest of the group can’t see in there. It’s the mentors’ help area. Julie, you know what to do, right?”

“Yes, Miss.”

Gunson led them into the room via the side door and then left Julie with Tom and Lynette.

Julie thought back to her training and recalled how Amelia Hadad had managed to get a traditionally observant Muslim girl to accept close physical contact with a boy. She remembered learning how Amelia had worked with the Muslim girl and the boy, with Amelia herself acting as a kind of catalyst. Julie realized that possibly Lynette could be the catalyst for Tom.

She positioned Tom and Lynette closely on the mat and she took a position in front of them, but at an arm’s length away. Julie had the siblings hold a hand and lean toward each other until their shoulders touched.

“Lynette, take your free hand and put it on top of your linked hands; now you two, close your eyes,” she instructed. “I’m going to take Tom’s free hand in my hands.” She did that. “Is holding like this okay, Tom?”

“Uh huh...”

“Now Tom, using the hand I’m holding, feel either of my hands all over—try to memorize how it feels. After you do that, try doing it with my other hand. You can let go of Lynette’s hands to touch mine with your other hand too, if you want.”

Tom used just his free hand to stroke Julie’s hands.

“How did it feel, Tom?” Julie asked after two minutes of his unenthusiastic stroking.

“Umm, like a hand? Sorry, what should I feel?”

“Do you have any feelings of closeness, pleasure, or attraction to me?”

“No, should I? I didn’t feel anything, really,” he remarked.

“Well, let me try stroking your hand,” Julie suggested.

He held out a hand and sat, impassive and face immobile, as Julie tried to elicit any visible emotion from her hand massage. Clearly she was not having any effect.

After a while, Julie asked Tom, “Do you know how sometimes blind people can read other people’s expressions? They use their hands to feel someone’s face—it’s face-reading by touch.”

“Umm, no, I haven’t heard about that...”

"But you do see how it can work? Kinda like reading Braille, okay?"

"I guess," Tom said uncomfortably.

Julie leaned closer. "Tom, still keeping your eyes closed, tell me what kind of emotion my face is showing. I'll shift your hand to my face now."

Julie did, and Tom tentatively moved his fingers over her cheek but recoiled when he touched her lips. Julie took his hand and repositioned it on her forehead but Tom wouldn't move it down, only up to her hairline.

"Tom, to feel my expressions, you'll need to touch my whole face, my lips and around my eyes too."

"Sorry, Julie, I can't... It's... it's... um... just too intimate."

Julie frowned. She reached forward. "Tell me how this feels. Lynette is still holding you for support, right?"

"Uh huh..."

Julie touched Tom's cheek and moved her fingers down to the corner of his mouth; Tom jerked away in alarm.

"OH! Don't do that, Julie!" He pulled away from her.

"Tom, can I get closer to you while Lynette holds you?" Julie asked, approaching the end of her resources. "Keeping your eyes closed?"

"Um, I don't know... just don't touch my face, okay?"

Julie took Tom's free hand in both of hers and shifted close to him. She stroked his hand, the palm, back, fingers, kneaded his skin, but he never relaxed; he kept his hand rigid and his muscles were tightly locked.

Watching all this, Lynette was greatly troubled. She had assumed that Tom's phobia was tied to his nudity aversion, but now it seemed that he couldn't relax his guard enough to allow another person to get close to him.

*Could it be?—why perhaps he's never really made any close friends? she wondered. But he hugs and kisses others...? Makes no sense... she mused.*

Then Julie asked Tom to open his eyes. When he saw how close Julie had moved to him, he grunted and slid away from her about an arm's length. She quietly shook her head.

"Tom, does being close still make you uncomfortable?"

"Yeah, sorry, Julie. Nothing personal. It's... it's like... I dunno... dangerous? Wrong? To be so close? I don't know why."

"Well, I don't know anything more I can do here, then. We mentors learned how to help kids

who are sorta touch-shy, that's actually kinda common among kids our age, you know. But, well, I'm fresh out of ideas. This is above my pay grade," she grinned at them. "They don't pay me enough to solve everyone's problems."

They all chuckled, Tom ruefully, shaking his head. "I'm really sorry," he said. "Maybe this Avery stuff isn't for me, after all. I don't need to be able to be touchy-feely with everyone in the school to succeed here."

"But the rest of the program—the problem-solving games, role playing, confidence and trust building—they're also an important part of the program," Julie objected.

"Yeah, I guess, but I heard a little about those exercises and I assume that the idea is for those parts to work well, I'd need to have a strong relationship with the other kids by this... um, bonding stuff?"

"That's right, the bonding's the key to the whole program," Julie agreed. "But you can't do any of this bonding stuff at all?" Tom shook his head sadly. "Well, I suppose you can leave—I'm not sure where you should go, but I don't know about Lynette. Lynette, you've missed a big part of today's exercise and it's kinda too late to fit you in now, even if we had a partner for you, someone else would miss out without a partner for the rest of the day."

Lynette nodded. "That's okay, Julie; I was having a bad time of it with my partner too in there. If we had stayed, I don't think I could have done that embracing part when Tom ran out and like Tom, I don't think I need to learn how to touch other kids or to enjoy their touching. During our summer course, we saw how your whole group acted together, remember? How close all of you were? Tom and I were fine with that—we didn't feel left out by your group's closeness. You saw that, right?" Julie nodded. "So we'll be fine; Tom and I don't need to experience that closeness to others ourselves. We have our family closeness and both Tom and I are very close and loving. We get by just fine with other people too and don't need any additional closeness that this program seems to develop. We'll be fine just as we are."

Tom and Lynette left the room while Julie stood there sadly, wondering what else she could have done to help Tom.

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When Tom and Lynette left the training room, they didn't know where to go, so they trooped off to Mrs Darden's office. She was the school counselor and had worked with them to arrange their schedule.

"So why are you here now?" she asked. "You're in your P.E. kits—ah. You're supposed to be in the Avery Program class now, aren't you?"

"Yes, Miss," Tom agreed sadly, "but I couldn't stay. I couldn't do the exercises."

"But the mentors are supposed..."

Lynette interrupted. "Tom did work with a mentor. It didn't help him. I tried to help Tom too,

with the mentor working together with both of us. He kind of panics—not panic, but becomes... um..."

Tom broke in. "I can't let the other kids touch me how they showed us in the class. I zone out, get anxious, and then I need to get away from them. It's not like the panics I used to get, but it's so uncomfortable that I can't stay and be touched like that."

"You don't like *any* touching?" Darden asked.

"No, the touching's okay; it's no problem—in my family we hug and kiss," Tom answered. "Also on my team last spring, I hugged my teammates after we did good stuff, like wins or had good race times. Some of Lynette's girlfriends have hugged and kissed me and I kissed them back. I've had massages too, so touching's not a problem. But in that room—something about it—the intimacy with a stranger, I guess something like that. It felt wrong somehow. Maybe I can't handle a physical kind of intimacy without a psychological... maybe emotional... attraction? I just don't know..."

Darden nodded. "That may be an astute observation, Tom. But everyone in the school is supposed to be in that program and your schedules were arranged for that. Now your schedules are all out of synch so we'll have to work you into some regular classes for the next two weeks. I don't know when the next Avery opportunity will open..."

"But I said I can't do it at all, Miss," Tom insisted.

"Hmmm, I see. But we do require that every pupil complete the program; the Education Authority expects it for our school. Well, I'll have to consult some other staff on how to proceed. Meanwhile, let's see, please go to the media room and find some work to do; I'll get your schedule sorted and I'll call for you later."

They thanked her and left.

Of course the news that two pupils had left one of the Avery Program sessions was immediately reported to Mr Hanford, the head teacher. Mr Tolliver had sent word to him about what had happened in the Avery room, and soon after Tom and Lynette left the counselor's office, Hanford called her.

"Nancy, I just heard of a problem in the Avery class..." he began.

"Yes, the two Armstrong kids just left here. They told me about it and I sent them to the media room. I need to get their schedules sorted now."

"Indeed. But how will you go about putting them into a future program class? Our schedules are extremely tight."

"I'm not sure how to handle this; they said they can't participate at all, even in future sessions. I need to—no, *we* need—to discuss this. Is there such thing as an Avery Program expert? It's so new, after all."

"Hmm, the only person, erm, people, I'm aware of are the designers in the colonies—in Atlanta,

also the Corises, but I think they left for home just last month.”

“But there’s Amelia and Jeremy too, aren’t there.”

“Even though they did amazing things for the Avery Program, Nancy, they’re still sixth-form pupils. We can’t ask them to, erm, diagnose?—whatever—what appears to be an unusual psychological problem. Let’s see. I’ll ring a few people and then we’ll try to meet about this.”

She agreed.

## Chapter 15

That afternoon, after Tom and Lynette had returned home, Tom told Angela what had happened to him in the Avery class.

“Oh, Tom!” Angela exclaimed when he told her about how he had felt about the holding of hands and how the touching made him begin to have signs of anxiety.

“But it wasn’t at all like the panic I used to get, Mom,” he assured her. “This was more of a feeling of... discomfort... anxiety, I guess. I was really uncomfortable at first, and as I tried to push that feeling away, only then did I start to get the anxious feelings. The touching didn’t start the feeling. It started when... um... like when I tried... yeah, when I tried to *deny* the anxiety. Maybe my body knew something was wrong, it didn’t want the intimate touching... maybe it was too intimate for me... and when I tried to damp down how I felt, my body hit me with a way it knew would stop me from any further touching.”

Angela hugged Tom. “Honey, that was a wonderful explanation; it looks like you have a pretty good handle on figuring out your own responses to emotional feelings. But how do you feel about touching other people and having them touch you?”

Tom shrugged. “Jeez, I never gave it any thought at all before this. I’m fine with hugging. Hey, I even hug back some of Lynette’s friends when they hug me... Lynn timer, some of your friends are comin’ on to me, you know,” he teased.

She shoved him playfully. “Yeah, and I’ll scratch out their eyes if they try anything more than hugs...!”

Tom went on thoughtfully. “Yeah, some of the guys on my track team hugged me after I had a good race time—we slapped each other on the arses too, all in fun; that’s fine; doesn’t bother me. Say, I told Darden—she’s our counselor—that I maybe I can’t handle being even a little intimate with a girl without having a psychological or maybe emotional attraction to her. I love Lynette so, so much that in my deepest thoughts, I must feel that any kind of intimacy with someone else is betraying her.”

“Oh, Tommie, that’s so sweet,” Lynette murmured as she hugged him and Angela smiled at them both.

“You know, Tom, that sounds exactly right!” Angela exclaimed. “Maybe you’re reacting to a challenge to your commitment to Lynette, not some kind of psych problem.”

Lynette broke in then and began telling her mom about her own experience.

“Yeah, Mom, I kinda felt a little like Tom, doing that stuff. The part we were doing this morning was a bonding exercise and had us first holding hands, then stroking each other’s hands, telling the boy things about me, then we were supposed to embrace each other ... doing that hand-holding and stroking felt so friggin’ awkward and uncomfortable to me; then when the embracing was started, that was getting way too intimate for me and it suddenly occurred to me that if *I* was feeling like that, what about Tom? Then all hell broke loose and Tom went running out... *HOLY*

*SHIT!*” she broke off.

“Lynette! Language!” Angela chided gently. “What did you think of? I know when your light bulb goes on, darling.”

“Yeah Mom, that’s it! Why Tom reacted; I kinda reacted to that also. Those bonding exercises? Our holding hands, caressing them, sitting close and chatting quietly about private little things—all that—Tom and I—*we’ve been doing all that together* since forever! Oh shi... Sorry. Years ago, Tom and I must have bonded intimately, just like in the Avery Program, but exclusively. We’ve always loved each other... since we first met but our ... what?—yeah, our *psyches* must have bonded and our bodies must have reacted to having the *wrong* person doing the stuff with us that bonded us together. I was just uncomfortable doing it with another guy ‘cause it just felt so *wrong*. Apparently when Tom feels something wrong so deeply, he panics or something—he’s learned that as a defensive measure. Right, Mom? Tom?”

While Lynette was talking, Angela was staring at her in awe. When Lynette finished, Angela could hardly express herself, her chest had swelled with love and admiration for her daughter. Meanwhile Tom, who had been listening raptly, responded.

“Damn, sis, that’s perfect... sounds like you figured it out—*again!* Yeah, sure I remember how we sat... hours sometimes, just stroking each other’s hands while watching tv or talking while sitting so close I could feel your breathing... No, that’s why I can’t do that with anyone else. Doing that with another person was just wrong!”

Angela had recovered her voice. “My god, darling, that was so incredibly perceptive. If you want to consider careers, you’d make an awesome psychiatrist or psychologist.”

Lynette blushed and whispered. “Thanks, Mom.”

Tom wondered, “Well, Darden told us she’d have to redo our schedules now. But I wonder if they’ll try to get me to do it again.”

Angela grinned mirthlessly. “Well, I’m certain we’ll hear from the school pretty soon. Don’t worry about it, honey, okay?”

Tom nodded.

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Three days after Tom’s aborted Avery class session, Hanford assembled a group to discuss how to deal with Tom’s problem in the Avery Program. In addition to Mrs Darden, the school counselor, he had arranged with the Education Authority to have Dr Marjory Seetis attend, she was a psychologist from the Department for Education and was a member of the National Program Committee. She had been involved with the Avery Program’s replacement of the Naked in School Program. Also attending were Miss Gunson together with Mr Turner and Mrs Robbins, two teachers who had conducted the most Avery Program sessions.

Hanford opened the meeting, introducing everyone to Dr Seetis.

“So first I want Dr Seetis to listen to our description and impressions of what happened before she addresses our issue. Dr Seetis, I want you to see how we view the problem first and then have you take over the discussion. Is that satisfactory?”

“Yes, that will work,” she agreed. “Let me know the situation’s background and how you’ve dealt with any similar cases. You told me when I rang you back to arrange this meeting that it was about a touch-shy pupil.”

Hanford nodded. “Yes. Thanks. The issue actually involves a case of extreme touch-shyness and nothing like it has come up before in our Avery sessions. As well, I’ve reviewed all of the materials we have from Avery University and find that there’s no mention of dealing with what seems to be a case of intractable touch-avoidance in a pupil. The Avery Program has a protocol for dealing with touch-avoidance; in fact, Miss Denise Roberts actually developed it. She taught it to several of our teachers and it’s been successfully used and improved at the beginning of our pilot program last spring. But that protocol didn’t work for this particular pupil last week. Miss Gunson, can you describe what happened?”

Gunson gave a brief description of her observation of Tom’s class session and concluded by telling the group what Julie had reported to her.

She finished, “Now even though this was one of Julie’s first interventions, she’s quite perceptive and resourceful, but our mentors have been drilled not to, erm... ‘wing it,’ as they say, and they know that they must stick to the techniques which we know have worked in prior sessions. In fact, Julie remembered what Amelia Hadad had accomplished last spring with a religious Muslim girl and she tried that technique too, but to no avail.”

Mrs Darden asked, “For cases of children who are touch-shy, it seems that with a little coaching and encouragement, they can mostly overcome it, right?”

“Yes, that’s always been the case, up to now,” Mr Turner agreed. “When we were trained during the school’s first round of Avery classes, we were told that some degree of touch-shyness can occur in about 5 to 7 percent of kids. The uni students who worked with us during our training mentioned that most cases are mild, and that’s been my personal experience as well. We’ve only had two pupils last spring who we had to remove from the program for psychological reasons, one had a mild form of autism and has hypersensitivity to various stimuli like touch and the other pupil has moderate behavior problems. We didn’t risk putting that second one in the Avery Program because he was somewhat antisocial; he’s subsequently been diagnosed as having a social anxiety disorder. Since both pupils were receiving special ed lessons, we decided that we could leave them out of the required Avery sessions. But the pupil we’re meeting about, Tom Armstrong, he appears to be a normal teenager—with the possible exception of his having those letters in his file asking for exemptions in using the locker room and shower.”

Darden nodded. “I recall from my psych classes that the children with more severe forms of social problems are easy to spot since they exhibit other behavioral issues. Fortunately they’re somewhat rare, like that one antisocial pupil from last spring. And teachers deal with autistic children fairly frequently these days. But Tom Armstrong seems totally normal. The letters from

his prior therapists deny any forms of a social anxiety disorder, only a phobia concerning being naked. Apparently that's why his parents switched his school to Norwich."

Hanford took over the discussion. "I believe this summarizes the incident, but we're starting to stray into theorizing and conjecture. Dr Seetis, perhaps now is a good time to tell us if we've missed anything."

Dr Seetis looked around the group. They were watching her intently.

"I can see from your expressions that you expect me to work miracles and give you advice to make everything good again. Psychology isn't only a science; it's also a bit of an art and requires intuition as well, so there's no standard recipe for handling every diagnosis—and the actual diagnosis may only be a choice from among several related options. You mentioned a number of psych terms: phobia, touch-shyness, social anxiety disorder. I think a review of those terms and how they might apply here might help; that is, help in understanding what I believe your issue might be.

"We all know that some people don't like to be touched. Mr... ah, Turner mentioned a number, 5 to 7 percent, that's the population of adolescents who exhibit some degree of aversion to being touched, over a mild to severe spectrum. You all probably know that a child who's touch-averse typically seems distant in interpersonal relationships; they act aloof from others. There exists a disorder where the person is simply hypersensitive to being touched, that's called allodynia, a painful touch—that's a neurological problem, obviously not the case here. The mild form of touch-aversion may be a discomfort of someone getting inside a person's 'personal space'"—she made finger quotes—"but in its more severe form, the reluctance is regarded as a phobia and has a variety of names: touch avoidance or tactile defensiveness; the technical terms are chiraptophobia, aphenphosmophobia, or haphophobia; there are a few other Greek names for it too. Those hard-to-spell names add gravitas to psychologists' diagnoses, don't you know?"

Everyone laughed.

"Those are different names for basically the same disorder, it's regarded as one of the specific phobias falling into the general group of social phobias. Some experts seem to regard it as a subtype of sensory defensiveness; you probably can see why.

"So enough with technical definitions. I think I've heard enough about this young man, enough to believe that he doesn't fit into the usual picture of people who exhibit touch avoidance. In general, the most common forms of touch-avoidance are found in autistic people, as Mr Turner mentioned. These people dislike touching because of their inability to filter out physical sensations. In a word, as Mr Turner said, they're hypersensitive. Touch aversion is also associated with premature birth, but this is mostly seen in babies and young children. Its major precipitating cause in the general population is as a reaction to physical abuse; touch-aversion can develop in children or adults as a result of inappropriate sexual or non-sexual touching. I'm guessing that the young man's records don't indicate any information which suggests that kind of history."

Hanford shook his head. "No. And I interviewed the family in January and found them to be quite open and outgoing, while Tom Armstrong seemed to have an engaging and friendly personality."

Seetis nodded. "Excellent. Then from what I'm hearing, we can rule out other frequent diagnoses which involve intimacy, those personality disorders like avoidant personality disorder or schizophrenia, I think. People with those disorders will avoid contact with others for many reasons but also because they may fear being touched. From your description, Tom Armstrong appears to be 'normal'"—she made air-quotes—"in all respects but touching."

Miss Gunson replied. "From what Julie, the session's mentor, reported, Tom's had no problems whatsoever in touching contact with either sex. Julie told me that she spent about six weeks this summer with Tom as members of a group of two dozen pupils on a cultural program traveling in Europe. In that group setting, he was totally comfortable interacting with everyone the whole time. He was outgoing and friendly and certainly wasn't averse to casual touching and hugging, she told me. He reacted only when he was in the Avery Program class setting."

"Did you notice any overt physical signs of distress with him in that Avery class?" Seetis asked her.

"Oh yes," Gunson answered. "He was pale and sweating. Trembling, too. I watched when his partner was trying to get him to hold her hands. His body was rigid and his arms were shaking."

"That fits a classic panic reaction, actually," Seetis replied. "People react, here's the laundry list, with panting, dizziness, rapid breathing, shaking, irregular heartbeat, sweating, nausea, intense fear, dry mouth, and an inability to articulate words or sentences..."

"That too," Gunson broke in.

Seetis frowned. "Sorry? What do you mean?"

"The inability to articulate words or sentences. Tom was having difficulty expressing himself to me."

Seetis nodded. "Yes. Classic panic. And from the boy's records, he also panics if he's naked?"

Hanford shook his head. "Not quite. It appears he panics on just *seeing* someone naked. His last school had to keep him away from any of the participants chosen for doing the Naked in School Program."

"Ah? I wonder how they did that?" Seetis remarked. "If he panicked on just *seeing* nudity, how would he have... ah, was he ever selected for the Program?"

"No," Hanford stated. "I spoke to their head teacher. He told me that based on Tom's medical documentation and also following a visit from the family's solicitor, it had made it necessary for the school to exempt him."

"Sorry? Exempted? That's most unusual," Seetis said. "I'm not aware of exemptions being given without approval from the National Program Committee."

“However it was arranged, apparently Tom was exempted.”

“I see. But that issue isn't of concern to us now, is it,” Seetis mused. “No matter, we aren't dealing with nudity now. If Tom is to be helped, a therapist should attempt to discern the underlying cause of his touch-avoidance to choose the best mode of therapy for him. It's possible that he could be helped, but sometimes these cases take a fair amount of therapy time.”

“How long would you expect?” Hanford asked.

“This is an unusual presentation,” Seetis remarked. “It's possible that a year or more may be required. Also, Tom would need to be motivated and cooperative.”

“So where does this put him, and us, as far as his participating in the Avery Program?” Hanford asked.

“From what I've heard here today, clearly he's unable to participate in the basic bonding exercises. I can't see Tom participating if he's unable to form the initial emotional attachments with his group. This isn't like the Naked in School Program where a reluctant or oppositional pupil can be coerced or otherwise pressured to participate. After all, simply taking their clothes away and setting them out into the school environment immediately achieves their participation. The Avery Program requires that the participant voluntarily follows directions. That can't be achieved by coercion, can it.”

Hanford nodded. “What do you recommend, then?”

Seetis replied, “Have you spoken to the parents, then?” Hanford indicated that he hadn't. “I'd contact them and discuss the problem. Explain the benefits of the Avery Program. Have them take Tom to a therapist. It would appear that he'd be a good subject since he has few indications of any major social disorders.”

“If his treatment lasts for an extended period...?” Hanford began and Seetis stopped him.

“The Department for Education... that is, the reconstituted and reoriented National Program Committee, hasn't even begun the transition from the Naked in School Program to the Avery Program as far as requirements, not even to mention, its rules. That committee only exists on paper right now; no one wants to have anything to do with it. As far as the Avery Program goes, you've only trained, what?—a few dozen teachers. Teaching programs at the uni level are just beginning to design the program's curriculum, and most of that work is relying on a number of grad students—who, incidently, were the first trainees here at your school. That said, Mr Hanford, once again you're operating in virgin territory and you're free to find your own way. I'll be watching what you do with this problem with fascination, I assure you.” Seetis grinned and sat back in her chair as she surveyed the baffled expressions of the others in the room.

“Cheer up,” she chuckled, “it isn't all that bad. Just have a cuppa and mull over your options. Having a cuppa is the cure for all problems, isn't it.”

Everyone in the room laughed as the meeting started to break up

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Soon after the meeting, Hanford sent a letter to the Armstrongs. In it he apologized for the formality of the written communication, but assured them that this was done solely to document the fact that the school was following proper procedure over a curriculum problem involving their son. The letter quickly summarized the issue with Tom's inability to participate in the Avery Program and asked that they contact the school to arrange a meeting to discuss Tom's situation.

Duncan showed Tom the letter and told him not to worry, that he and Angela would make certain that Tom would be protected from having to do anything uncomfortable.

"Son, we need to discuss what to tell your head teacher. Mom and I've decided that we can't divulge that the two of you are romantically involved."

"That's good, Dad," Tom agreed. "That would make it awkward for us at school."

"I know, son. I agree that you and Lynette are so closely bonded that you feel uncomfortable getting close to another girl the way that bonding stuff they do is supposed to work. And they expect the bonding to work with a bunch of boys and girls all together. That may be a teen boy's dream but it's not for you; obviously you two have committed to each other."

Tom nodded emphatically and hugged his father. "Thanks, Dad. I don't know what they may come up with, but I'm very leery of being forced to be so familiar with kids I only may have casual contact with."

"We'll see what they say. Don't worry, Mom and I won't commit to anything unless you agree."

"Good. Thanks, Dad."

The following day Angela called the school office and a meeting was scheduled.

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When the Armstrongs arrived at the school's main office, Mr Hanford greeted them and asked them to come into his office and be seated.

He opened the conversation. "Mr and Mrs Armstrong, as I told you when I sent you my post, Tom had a problem when he began his first Avery Program session. Mrs Armstrong, when you rang me to arrange this meeting, you told me that Tom and Lynette had told you what happened; he was unable to do the first several exercises and then left the room."

Angela nodded.

"Well, I had a meeting with some teachers and a psychologist from the DfE, formerly the Program Committee rep. We discussed Tom's situation—what happened during the session and some of the reasons Tom might have reacted as he did. Reviewing his file, I noticed that he was diagnosed with a phobia reaction to nudity but there was nothing which showed that he had any other diagnosed problem ... erm, they apparently term it a 'social disorder.'"

Duncan answered. "Yes, and his diagnosed phobia is actually quite limited. He panics if he's forced into a situation where he sees nudity and isn't permitted to escape from that situation. This is why we had to take him out of a school where he would constantly be exposed. His therapists have no idea why he reacts as he does, but they recommended no treatment as no one, even Tom, was harmed by his aversion. And his phobia hasn't had any effect on his social adjustment, either. Their recommendation was for him to wait until he's an adult and is ready for treatment but only when he feels that he's ready."

"Hmm, this brings up a related matter," Hanford replied. "We have a school swimming requirement. Locker room showers are required for pool use. How will Tom be able to participate there? All pupils are required to pass a swimming test."

"Ah, yes. That's another issue," Duncan admitted. "That's in his file too; it was with his other medical info. He had an incident when he was little when a few bullies almost drowned him. He has a severe aversion to water—he's seen a psychiatrist about that too. The recommendation is that he needs to be ready and willing to try to treat that problem too. He should have the medical exemption in his file. None of his other schools have challenged it."

Hanford sighed. "All right then. So we're back to the Avery Program matter then. The psychologist we consulted believes that Tom's problem with touch-avoidance should be treated. She thought it was an unusual form of touch-avoidance and not one normally associated with a social anxiety disorder. We'd like you to arrange for his therapy and to have your therapist send periodic progress reports to our nurse. Our consultant thought that his therapy might take an extended time, given its being an unusual form of sensitivity."

Angela shook her head. "Mr Hanford, if you want Tom to have treatment, I suggest that you have a school psychologist arrange for it."

"Ah, Mrs Armstrong, the school doesn't have access to a school-funded psychologist. In Britain, everyone gets their medical care from the National Health Service. Funding for any psych services to schools has been cut so many times over the past few years that direct services are virtually unavailable."

Duncan replied, "Sorry to hear that, Mr Hanford. However, my wife and I will not send Tom to a psychologist on our own. You see, that would send a message to him that we think he needs therapy. Well, we don't. Tom doesn't have any problems excepting those which you found when you put him into the school's Avery Program. We've spoken to him and he told us that he only reacts negatively to close physical contact where there's no emotional connection to the other person. He accepts hugs from friends and doesn't avoid casual touching by either boys or girls. My wife and I feel that Tom is totally normal in wanting close, intimate contact only with others with whom he has a strong emotional connection. We don't see that he has any psychological disorder to treat. If you want him to be treated so that he may be able to take part in your program, then arranging such treatment would be your responsibility. You see, if you were to provide the treatment, and if he were to agree to it, then he would know that the school wanted the treatment, not his parents."

“That puts me in a difficult position, then, Mr and Mrs Armstrong. Our school’s policy is that pupils must complete the Avery...”

Angela interrupted. “Excuse me, sir. This is a *school* policy? You’ve been told how our son reacts. You have a *school* policy on swimming, and Tom will be exempted from that, I’m certain. Please tell me, how are these two requirements different?”

Hanford looked surprised. “Hum... Well... Point taken. The Avery Program was Norwich Academy’s substitute for running the Naked in School Program when the DfE required it of us. We’ve simply applied it as a school completion requirement, just as the program it replaced required.”

“Yes, but it’s still only in *this* school,” Duncan pressed him. “There’s no national requirement for it. And in the end, the government didn’t require you to have that naked program, correct? Now both of our children, Lynette included, have an aversion to the activities in the Avery Program. Lynette won’t do it without Tom, she told us. She feels the same as he does, but she doesn’t have the same strong physical reaction; we’re glad she doesn’t. We don’t see how you’d be able to convince them to participate, and I assure you, sir, you can’t withhold any certification of their academic achievements needed for advancing their education, I’m sure.”

Hanford shrugged. “This is all unexplored territory. True, there’s no way to coerce a pupil to participate—we have just the opposite problem—we weren’t able to have every pupil take part in the program last spring; everyone was clamoring to do it but we didn’t have enough scheduled time or teachers. I suppose we’ll need to consider what to do in cases like your children. They are so very atypical, it would appear—they both are certainly more mature than most of the children in even the sixth form here, according to their teachers. They’re extremely considerate of everyone, very outgoing, cooperative, and supportive—all the characteristics we want the Avery Program to help instill in our children. What I’m chiefly concerned about is that they may be seen as ... outsiders ... not members of any group who’ve been through the program, I think.”

“Well, my husband and I are well aware that Tom and Lynette have already interacted with a group of Avery Program kids,” Angela pointed out. “You have that summer cultural program as an example of that interaction. What did the teachers report?”

Hanford nodded. “True, they interacted very well and weren’t treated as outsiders, although the teacher did observe that they were more aloof in settings where the group intimacy was high. We expected to see that happening and the teacher was prepared. When your children saw that intimacy developing, they would leave for their own room.”

“But the other kids didn’t criticize them for not participating, right? Lynette told us they looked like group groping sessions and that made her uncomfortable,” Angela asked.

“That’s correct. The other pupils didn’t seem to care,” Hanford agreed.

Angela went on, “And supposedly the Avery Program instills respect for others not in their immediate group, isn’t that so?—at least, that’s what Lynette said she heard from a friend who was in it. I think your fears of my children being ostracized are unfounded, Mr Hanford.”

He threw up his hands. "Well, you've outflanked me, it would appear. I've run out of objections. I will hold out a little hope, though, that if your children see the effects that the Avery Program has on our other pupils, they may change their minds and try again."

Duncan smiled. "If they do that, I certainly won't dissuade them, sir. So are we agreed then? Just let this matter rest and let things develop as they will, as our children continue here at Norwich?"

Hanford nodded. "Okay then. We'll let the matter rest for now. Thanks for coming in. Please keep in touch if you have any further thoughts about Tom's situation and as well, I will let you know if we have any developments at the school."

They all rose, shook hands, and the Armstrongs took their leave.

Later on at home, they told their children about the meeting.

"So the Head won't try to put me in those classes again?" Tom asked.

Angela shook her head. "No, he knows what happened when you were in the class and how that worked out. You two kids just need to keep up whatever you're doing that has your teachers impressed by your maturity. Dad and I heard a good report about you."

"Thanks!" both Tom and Lynette exclaimed.

Lynette asked, "Did he say anything about what comes next for us, Mom?"

"Not really. Just that if you begin to feel that you can benefit from the Avery classes, you can ask to be included then."

Tom and Lynette looked at each other and Tom shrugged.

Lynette giggled, "That's not very likely, Mom."

## Chapter 16

Several weeks passed and Tom and Lynette found themselves drawn into more and more school social and extra-curricular events. Tom was running with the cross-country team and their first race date was approaching. Their chorus class was rehearsing for a concert and Lynette had a brief solo in one of the numbers. Their friendship with Roberta and Simon was burgeoning and one day at lunch, Roberta asked Lynette about dating.

“Lynette, Simon and I’ve noticed that you don’t seem interested in boys. Hell, every boy who’s asked you out, I’ve seen you politely shoot them down. The only boy you really pay attention to is your brother. I’d like to invite you to go on some of our gang’s group dates or parties, but...”

Lynette stopped her. “Yeah, Roberta, I know. And I can’t believe that no one’s asked me, or Tom either, about why we don’t date. Until you did now. Tom and I don’t date for a reason. Last year in school, when I refused dates, I kinda got a rep that I was frigid or a lezzie...”

“The Avery Program taught us not to label...” Roberta started.

“Yeah, I know that. It’s kinda amazing, actually. There’s no bullying here, no put-downs. Let me see... I’ll ask Tom when he gets here if he wants to get together with you and Simon to talk about it... oh here they come. Can we get together with you after school?”

Roberta nodded, “Sure.”

Simon and Tom arrived at their table and sat.

Lynette leaned over and whispered, “Tom, how about us getting together with Roberta and Simon after school?”

He nodded. “Sure.”

Lynette asked Roberta, “Where should we meet? Is today okay?”

Roberta looked at Simon. “Sweetie, we’re gonna meet up with them after school. How ‘bout Romano’s? Right after school?”

Simon nodded, “Yeah, sounds good.” He looked at Tom. “They’re not close but they have the best pizza, don’t they,” he grinned.

After the lunch period ended and they were headed to class, Lynette told Tom about her conversation with Roberta.

“So I think we need to tell them a little about us, sweetie,” she finished.

“Is that a good idea? I mean, if the word gets out...”

“We’ll sound them out. I think what they learned in the Avery Program about spreading stories and being sensitive about others will help them keep quiet. You’ve noticed that there’s no bullying and rot like that here?”

Tom looked dubious. “Yeah... well, maybe.”

After school they were delayed a few minutes by their chorus teacher; then they rode their bikes the dozen blocks to the pizza place. When they walked in, they noticed Simon at a table in the far corner, and went there.

“Roberta nipped off to the... oh, here she comes,” Simon said. “The menu’s on the wall. Order at the counter. We’ve already ordered.”

Lynette whispered her choice to Tom, who went to order.

“Sorry we were delayed,” she told them. “Our chorus teacher kept us a little longer to tell us that the drama department is planning to do a musical for the Christmas performance and they wanted singers from our class. And they wanted *ME!* I have a solo in a chorus number and the drama teacher heard me.”

Tom rejoined them. “Yeah, Lynette has a sweet voice. They asked her to be in the musical; it’s ‘The Mikado,’ you know, Gilbert and Sullivan.”

“Oi, we heard they were doing that,” Roberta said. “One of the lead roles is gonna be Amelia Hadad, you know, the girl who’s the youngest person to be knighted.”

“Yes, she came in with the drama teacher. She’s playing Yum-Yum. And they want me to do Pitti-Sing; she’s something like Yum-Yum’s sister, I think. There are seven songs where I’d have a solo and some chorus singing too. Half the chorus class signed up. Tom did too!”

Tom looked sour. “Yeah. They *made* me sign up. I have a deeper bass-baritone voice. But I’m not auditioning for any named roles; I’ll tell you that! Amelia told Lynette that she didn’t have to audition; her lower soprano voice was perfect for the role. What’s it called? Mezzo-soprano.”

Roberta looked at Tom. “Are there a lot of male roles in it that need a deep voice?”

Tom nodded. “Apparently. Um, three? Four? Linnie, do you remember?”

“Well, they said the emperor and two nobles, at least,” Lynette mused. “Tom agreed to be in the chorus. I think they already have the male leads picked out.”

“Well, if Amelia is in it, it should be good. She was in a play last year that had the newspaper critics in an uproar. She got rave reviews and for something like two or three weeks, there were agents hounding her to sign up with them,” Simon offered.

“Wow,” Lynette mused, “she seemed so ... demure? when she was speaking to the chorus class. Quiet, but I could feel her projecting her passion for her acting.”

Tom nodded. “She was magnetic. Did you see her eyes? Even though she spoke quietly, I noticed that her eyes were flashing and she had the total attention of everyone in the room.”

Roberta smiled. “She’s quite a person. Everyone who meets her loves her. Her boyfriend’s quite a hunk too. Those two have a real history here. When they tried to start the Program here last year, I saw him deck three big blokes who were trying to strip her...”

“Wait, what? I heard something about that happening!” Tom exclaimed. “That was Amelia?”

“Yeah, Jeremy and Amelia,” Simon agreed. “Word is that they were the ones who got our school out of having to run the Naked in School Program. Along with Amelia’s guardians, that is. That’s how she got into helping with the Avery Program and she got knighted for, um... she helped with some research that showed that continuing the Program would cost the government millions of quid. And then they—she and her guardians—showed another way—um, a better way to get kids to relate to each other than by being naked, anyway. That’s the Avery Program.”

“Don’t forget Jeremy the hunk, honey,” Roberta giggled. “Rumor’s that he was doing that blog that exposed a lot of the Program’s problems. That got the tabloids involved and turned people’s opinions against the Program.”

“Well, I can’t disagree with you about how bad the Program was,” Lynette remarked. “Remember, I told you this summer that we saw it happening at our old school but happily, I didn’t get picked. Then Tom and I transferred here to avoid it.”

Roberta grimaced. “Yeah, I remember those stories you told last summer. Brrrr. About what you heard from the kids at that other school on the north side. That was horrid. I wonder how things are there now...”

Lynette frowned. “Oh right. I did hear from one of the girls, Sarah, she’s the one who was in that year nine sex demonstration class. She emailed me with some news right around when school began. They kept the Program going there ‘cause her school was getting government money for it, but nobody’s being forced to do it now. She told me that they’re gonna have a super hard time getting anyone to volunteer, though, ‘cause anyone who was okay being naked has already done it. And oh yeah, Liz—the girl whose cousin Rita was raped—told her that the rapists had been identified and arrested and not only were they to be tried as adults, they were also subject to more severe penalties because they assaulted a Program participant. The school’s head teacher was sacked and the governors were replaced. She said that Rita’s doing fairly well, it seems she’s very resilient, and her family’s lawsuit against the local education people—the LEA, I think she said—is moving ahead now. All good news on that front—well, as good as stuff about that naked crap can be.”

“Nice to hear good news like that,” Roberta smiled. “But I’m curious about something you and Tom did—and I’m conflicted about asking, ‘cause we’ve been taught not to be nosey about other people’s affairs. So if it would bother you to talk about it, forget I asked, but you’ve never mentioned why you both dropped out of your Avery class. When it happened, the kids in that class were talking about how you and Tom had walked out and never came back, but then everybody got quiet about it and no one mentions it anymore. I know that the Avery Program teaches us not to spread rumors or tell tales about others, but...”

Lynette interrupted, “But that’s why we wanted to see you two now; you’ve become our closest friends. Tom and Simon are cross-country teammates too. Then at lunch, you asked me why I don’t date—why I don’t even hang out with any boys.” She looked at Tom.

Tom said, “And I don’t hang with any girls either. It’s related to why I dropped out of the Avery class and why Lynette supported me. But the reason’s terribly sensitive—we like you both and

don't want to mislead you or tell you lies.”

Lynette continued, “It's very simple. We trust you and hope you won't spread our story. It's that Tom and I are committed to each other.”

Simon and Roberta gasped. “But...” Roberta began.

“But we're brother and sister?” Tom asked. Roberta nodded. “That's true in a legal sense but actually we're not related at all in any biological way.”

“Sorry...?” Simon began, but Roberta said, “Oi! Different sets of parents, right?”

“Exactly!” Lynette agreed. “When my mom met Tom's dad, Tom and I met too, and we fell in love all the way back then. We didn't know it was love then, but we soon found that we were soulmates in every way. Our parents got married back then and that made us step-siblings. Look, turn it around. My mom pointed this out to me when we discussed my relationship with Tom. What if Tom and I had met first, fallen in love, and maybe gotten engaged—and then our parents had met and gotten married? People would have thought, ‘Oh, how cool is that?’ But flip the timing around; they married first, so society's taboo on intimacy between siblings, even unrelated step-siblings, rears its head. But our situation is no different than if Tom and I had gotten together first. So that's why we have to be very careful and keep our relationship quiet.”

“And that's mostly why I couldn't do the Avery stuff,” Tom said. “Lynn and I had been doing stuff exactly like those bonding exercises from when we were what? ten years old?—so my doing the exact same things with another girl felt so wrong. It wasn't like I was cheating Lynn, actually, but it was more like cheating myself. I couldn't make myself do something with another girl that I only wanted to do with her.”

Roberta and Simon stared at him, then Lynette, both openmouthed and speechless.

Lynette giggled. “I did some reading on babies and pet animals. According to those articles, what happened is that I imprinted on Tom. Doing that bonding stuff with someone else went against his psyche.”

Roberta sighed and leaned back. She was unaware that she had been holding her breath.

“Oh crikey,” she breathed. “Oi, I can see a little how you felt! Simon and I were pretty close before we did the Avery Program and when I was in it—when we got separated to work with other partners, it felt awkward at first, like I was being unfaithful.”

“Hell, it sure did!” Simon chimed in. “After every session, Roberta would come to me, tears in her eyes, to ask me if I still loved her. But we stuck it out and after a couple of days, my pain when I saw her with another bloke became bearable and then something clicked; we found that we could love more than one person, and then doing the exercises was awesome.”

“Yes, but the love we felt for the others was a different kind of love, sweetie,” Roberta agreed. “Our teachers told us that the different loves could be parental love, sibling love, romantic love, friend love, and that a person can love all kinds of ways without being unfaithful.”

Tom put his hands up. “Stop. You just said it right then. What Lynette and I experienced together was all those loves at once. Well, not parental, obviously. We were at first, absolute best friends and siblings too, then that quickly became romantic love. We bonded on all of those levels and for me, Lynette probably became an exclusive object of my love.”

“Can you see how Tom must have felt with trying to do those bonding things, Roberta, after your initial Avery experience?” Lynette asked. “If you were uncomfortable with the first few bonding sessions, how do you think Tom was affected? And me, as well?”

“Oh shit, you’re right,” Roberta breathed. “Simon and I love each other and we’re certain that it’s for the long term. But school romances don’t always last, we’ve been told. We hope ours will last.”

“I sure do,” Simon interrupted. “What I found out about myself during the Avery Program was that I could have intimate connections between me and a number of girls where we could snog with each other but still return to our chosen partner. Roberta and I have a real connection, but I also feel pretty close to many of the other girls in our group.”

Roberta nodded her agreement with his comment, and added, “I feel the same way. Our teacher told us ‘Love does not divide, it multiplies’ and said it was a quote from a famous science fiction writer—don’t recall the writer’s name. We learned about plural marriages and group families as being an extreme example of this kind of love. But I could never be romantically in love with more than one boy, even after the Avery Program.”

“But do you feel any discomfort seeing Simon kissing and almost groping another girl like we saw you guys doing last summer?” Lynette pressed.

“Hmmm. Well. You gotta realize that...” Roberta started. “Whew. Cripes, that’s a fair question. Let me get my thoughts in order. There’s a lot of emotional rubbish and other rot that answering that question brings up. Okay, during our Avery sessions, we all got really, really intimate with each other. We spilled our souls doing the role-playing, and whilst in the massage sessions we touched and caressed each other—especially when the teacher wasn’t paying attention, anyway—as we were learning how touch brings pleasure. So the, um, groping you saw was just more of doing what we had gotten used to doing. I couldn’t do that touching with a random bloke, even if it was a kid from another Avery group, I’m sure. And no, I wasn’t uncomfortable doing it, since both Simon and I did those things in our Avery sessions. That’s why we loved the naked hiking we all did, too. Is that what you mean?”

Lynette shuddered. “Yeah. But hearing that now, I’m really so glad I pulled out, but Tom...”

“Yeah, I’d of never made it,” Tom affirmed. His face was pale. “Simon, how did you feel seeing your honey doing crap with other boys?”

Simon shrugged. “It’s just what Roberta said. At first I duffed through the motions, just following along. I saw she wasn’t into any of it at first too, but then things began to change.”

Lynette muttered, “Brainwashing...”

“Sorry...?” Simon asked.

Lynette looked at him. “I just got this random thought. I noticed that the teachers’ instructions in the classes seemed mildly hypnotic and there was lots of repetition. I’m wondering whether the Avery Program uses, intentionally or deliberately, elements of psychological conditioning to make you guys more accepting of what they’re doing?”

Roberta looked thoughtful. “Oi, that’s a really wild idea, Lynette. A lot of us in that program have discussed our feelings and Simon and I are the only ones who reacted the way I described to you. Even Julie and Harry, the ones who became mentors and were pretty committed to each other before the Avery Program, were right on board with it from the beginning.”

Tom laughed, “Say, maybe that’s why the two of you clicked with Lynnie and me; we all kinda felt weirded out by the Avery Program at first.”

They all laughed.

Roberta continued, “So I can see those two, Julie and Harry, liking it ‘cause they’re both so empathetic. Why they got to be mentors. I guess that makes them feel close to lots of other people and not feel threatened about losing their partner’s affections.”

“That’s awfully perceptive, Roberta,” Lynette remarked. “But are there any other kids who were couples before the Avery Program?”

“Hmmm, I don’t think so. Simon, honey, anyone you remember?”

“Well, a few of the blokes were dating before, but I can’t think of any serious romances. Harry and Julie, sure. And us, of course.”

Tom asked, “How long have you two been an item, if I may ask?”

Roberta giggled. “We live ‘cross the street from each other all our lives, actually. We hung in our little group whilst growing up, and then when he found out that girls didn’t give the boys cooties, he began asking me to do ‘dates’ with him.”

“Oh how cute,” Lynette smiled. “Two more soulmates.”

“Yeah, and we’re both the only child in our families,” Simon mentioned. “That made our relationship closer, I guess. Someone our own age to talk about clobber.”

Lynette sighed and looked at Simon, then Roberta. “Well, back to our own revelation. Tom and I don’t date ‘cause we’re already an item. But we can’t come out of the closet on this; you can certainly see why. So how can we handle it in school?”

Roberta shrugged. “It might sound crazy but I think that if the two of you came to social events together, it wouldn’t really matter. Almost every year eleven’s been through Avery so there’ll be little or no gossip. I don’t think anyone will push you for details. As well, many of the kids don’t know you so they don’t know you’re related. Honey, what do you think?”

“Same, I guess. We’ve been taught not to label people or their relationships. I think all the blokes

I know won't question Tom about dating and if they find out that Lynette's his stepsister, I don't think that they'd care."

Soon the couples finished talking and left for their homes. On the way home, Tom thought about their conversation, but was paying attention to the traffic so he didn't speak to Lynette. When they arrived home, he had made a decision.

"So sweetie," he said, "let's do what they said; we'll act like a couple but cool it on any romantic displays. You think that would work?"

Lynette smiled at him. "I had the same thoughts, darling. Isn't it weird that they had the same initial reaction as us when they started their Avery Program?"

"Yah. Sure is. I get nice vibes from them too, and Simon is a really straight guy. He and Roberta make a cute couple. This year is so much better than last; I've made several friends already."

"Great. Do you ever want to go out with your new friends for a boys-only play date?" she grinned.

"Ah, well..."

"Oh, don't think you have to spend all of your time with me," Lynette assured him. "I'd like to have time to go do girlie stuff with my new friends, too, you know."

"Oh. Sure. It's just... well, I never had friends like I do now. This is a whole new experience. I won't ever ignore you, though, Linnie."

She hugged him. "Oh, I know you won't, darling. You do need to spread your wings and get some social experience."

She kissed him and he wrapped his arms around her in a passionate embrace.

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The next day, Lynette and Tom got notes in home room that gave them the rehearsal schedule for "The Mikado." The notes told them to pick up a copy of the script in the Music Department office; the packet included the libretto, score, and stage notes. Also, the siblings' chorus performance was to take place the following evening.

Their choral performance went well. Lynette felt that she was comfortable singing in front of an audience; Tom liked the anonymity of being just one of the voices in the chorus.

The first meeting of the cast for the musical seemed a bit chaotic to the siblings. The auditions were now complete and the cast of named characters was set. Amelia Hadad was, of course, Yum-Yum and Lynette was Pitti-Sing. Peep-Bo had been assigned to Beverly, another girl in their chorus class, and some of Lynette's songs involved the three girls.

The main male lead was Ko-Ko and he was played by Danny, a sixth-form boy who was tall, thin, had a high voice, a very mobile face, and a seriously wicked sense of humor. The musical's male love interest, Nanki-Poo, was the sixth-form prefect who helped teach in the siblings' voice

class; he had a smooth tenor voice, while the role of the emperor was played by a huge Black boy, a rugby player, who had a rumbling bass voice. The siblings were surprised by the selection for the role of Pooh-Bah—it was none other than Harry, the boy who was the mentor in their Avery class. His voice was in the low tenor range. The siblings didn't know the two remaining cast members, playing Pish-Tush, a low-voice male role, and Katisha, a contralto.

Mrs Dixon, the musical's director, summarized the plot overview by blocking each musical number with the assigned soloists and chorus members, having the soloists and chorus read their lyrics while she moved them to marks on the floor.

"See," she instructed, "your scores are marked with red numbers corresponding to the marks on the stage floor. When you say those lines or sing them, you should be moving between those marks. There's very little scenery, just a few risers so the stage won't be totally flat, so the play's visual interest will come from the costumes and your constant movement, always creating groupings and moving to create new ones according to the flow of the lyrics. This means that everyone will be moving around the stage a fair amount; lots of times you'll be singing as you move. Most of the spoken dialog, though, will be done standing stationary. And you need to interact with each other—you're not singing to the audience; you're communicating with each other. There are only a few numbers that are directed at the audience and I'll go over those when we rehearse them."

The crew ran through the musical numbers for Act One; each member marking their scores with notes to themselves, and then Mrs Dixon called a halt.

"Okay, not bad for the first run-through. But this is really important, especially for the chorus. *E-NUN-C-ATE!* Remember your choral classes. Soloists too. Remember how you're supposed to make each word *SNAP* as you sing or say it. Exaggerate the final consonants and make the vowels sound *ROUND*. You want the audience to understand what you're singing, after all, isn't that right. Okay, let's take a ten minute break and then we'll do Act Two."

Most of Lynette's part, especially the acting part, occurs in Act Two, where Pitti-Sing is a co-conspirator with Ko-Ko and Pooh-Bah in trying to deceive the emperor. Both Lynette and Tom had a lot of stage time—Tom with six numbers in Act One and four in Act Two, while Lynette was on stage for much of the second act. Tom was nonplused when he found out that the men's chorus in the musical was composed of only eight boys and as he had the lowest voice, his voice naturally formed the backbone of the chorus.

Lynette had four solo numbers with Amelia and they were complicated vocals, so they spent a lot of rehearsal time together. Over the next few weeks, the individual groups met together to rehearse their sets; in vocal and chorus classes, the cast members practiced their songs and had their delivery and diction critiqued. Meanwhile, Lynette and Beverly, the Peep-Bo, and Amelia, were becoming fast friends.

"She's just awesome," Lynette was telling Tom one evening after a rehearsal that ran into the late afternoon. "Amelia is such a trooper. She's always smiling and encouraging everyone."

"I know," Tom agreed. "In one of my numbers with her, I had some ideas about my character so I ad-libbed it a little bit. She saw it and gave me a real smile and a thumbs up. Later Dixon spoke to me about it; she was kinda annoyed at me and I had to convince her about why I thought it would work, but finally she told me to keep doing it my way. Then Amelia popped by and told Dixon that she thought it worked well too."

About two weeks before the final dress rehearsals, the chorus was working on some complicated action in several numbers involving the soloists and they were running late. Dixon asked if people could return after supper for an hour and a half, so the kids involved called their parents to get permission. Dixon told them she'd give them money for their meals if they couldn't get home and return in time and then sent them off.

Amelia organized several cast members to go with her for pizza: Lynette, Beverly and Jeanette, the Katisha, decided to go. So did Tom and another boy in the chorus.

Lynette and Amelia were talking about the musical when Amelia's mobile beeped with a text.

"Oh, it's Jeremy," she said. She looked at the message. "He was supposed to meet us but the orchestra rehearsal is running late too. He says he'll be there inside a half hour."

Beverly asked, "Is that enough time for him to eat?"

"Yeah. He said he'll come back and wait for our session to end; then we'll leave together."

They arrived at the pizza place; there were just a few customers. Finding some empty tables near each other, the kids pushed a few together, then they went to the counter to order. That done, they returned to their table and chatted and soon Beverly's and Amelia's orders were called and they got up to collect them. As they did, an older kid rose from where he was seated and ambled over to where Beverly and Amelia were standing.

"H'ya doin', chicks, wanna sit wi' me 'n' my mates?"

He was a beefy kid, poorly dressed, with a hard expression. Meanwhile a second boy, looking very much like the first, got up and walked over to them as Beverly turned to see who was coming.

"No, I don't care to join you," Amelia said firmly as Beverly told the other guy to stay away from her.

Tom looked up and saw what was happening. He started to get out of his seat as the manager rushed out from the back.

He came up to the boys. "I've warned ya before! Stop botherin' ma customers! Siddown or geddout or I'll call the bobbies! Now do it!"

Grumbling, the two boys returned to their seats.

Then the other orders were called and as Tom detoured past the troublemakers' table, he warned them not to bother the girls. The three boys seated there sneered at him.

“Yuh pussy, we’ll do whut we wan’,” one challenged.

Everyone now had their meals and ate, quietly discussing the play, for about ten minutes, then Amelia and Lynette got up to get beverage refills from the self-service fountain. As Amelia refilled her cup and Lynette stood by waiting for her turn, one of the troublemakers suddenly came up beside Amelia and put his arm on her shoulder, pulled her close, and tried to kiss her. Seeing this, Lynette backed away from Amelia and found herself in the grasp of the second boy who had come up behind her. He spun her around and started to hug her. Meanwhile, Tom had noticed the boys moving toward the girls and when he saw them grab the girls, he quickly jumped up to run over to them.

Things happened very quickly then. Amelia dropped her cup and twisted under the arm of the boy who was trying to embrace her. She threw his arm off her shoulder and grasping his arm, twisted around and threw him down to the floor in a perfect hip throw. His head hit a table post and he was out cold. Meanwhile, Lynette had turned to face her assailant and with a scowl, grabbed his shoulders and kned him hard in the groin. Both of them now lay moaning on the ground as Tom rushed up.

He grunted to Lynette, “You okay?” She nodded, and Tom looked at Amelia. “That was a sweet move. You okay too?”

She grinned at Tom and delivered a hard kick to her attacker’s side. Then the shop manager ran over, grabbed the guy’s legs, and began dragging him out of the shop.

Tom leaned down to the other guy, who was still doubled over on the floor clutching his groin and groaning, took hold of his jacket collar, and dragged him out of the shop, following the manager. He pulled the guy onto the sidewalk and let him go, dropping the guy’s upper body onto the pavement with a thud. The third guy from their table came running out of the shop while threatening revenge.

The manager called out, “Ya kids, ya neva come back, hear me? If ya do I’ll charge trespass!”

He turned to Tom. “Sorry f’ that happenin’—those kids jus’ begun bein’ a problem an’ now they’s banned from ma shop.”

Tom thanked him for helping them and returned inside. The others in their party were clustered around Amelia, who was looking a little pale. The manager came over and asked if they were okay.

Lynette looked at Amelia who nodded back.

“I’m fine, just a little shocked,” Amelia said. “I didn’t think I would need to do that to those gits,” she grinned mirthlessly. “I thought the manager’s warning would be enough.”

Tom asked Lynette, “You okay too? That was quite a kick you gave him.”

Lynette smiled but it was all teeth. “I had practice, remember? Our ambush?”

“Oh yeah. Right. That was a good shot too,” Tom acknowledged. “Amelia? Beverly? Let’s sit,

okay?" Tom prompted.

They sat and the manager brought over a selection of drinks and some packaged dessert snacks.

"On th' house," he told them. "Hope ya' come back."

"So, Amelia," Tom said, "that was some move you pulled."

She smiled. "I guess. Jeremy taught me. He's a black belt in taekwondo. After what happened to me last year—I guess you know about that..."

They all said that they did.

"...so I asked him to teach me some defensive throws. Came in useful. I guess I learned something!"

"You sure did!" Beverly exclaimed. "And Lynette! You nailed that other one good. What was it you said about an ambush?"

"Oh right. In our old school, some hoodlums tried to jump Tom and me. Some kind of revenge idea, they were real prats. I kneed the one guy. Tom took care of the rest. End of story."

"Oi!" Beverly exclaimed. "You get in trouble for doin' that? Get nicked?"

"'Nicked'?" Tom wondered.

Lynette grinned. "Tom's not quite familiar with a lot of Brit slang. Tom, it means 'arrested' by the cops."

Tom chuckled, "Was real lucky. Security camera recorded it and the cops saw we were just defending ourselves."

They continued talking for several more minutes and then Jeremy arrived.

"Hi, you missed the fun, Jeremy," Amelia told him. "But I have some pizza for you."

"Thanks, but what fun?"

Everyone tried to speak at once and Jeremy held up his hands. "Sorry? Wait! Who did what?"

Eventually he made out what everyone was trying to tell him about the fight, such as it was, and asked Amelia if she was all right.

"Of course!" she answered. "You taught me, right? Do you doubt your own student?" she grinned.

"Never!" he said and took her in his arms. "You did good."

Tom grinned at both of them. "That she did. She was awesome. Jeremy, I'm Tom. I've seen you around a bit but never had the chance to introduce myself. Lynette tells me she's met you."

"Sure, she did. Hi, Tom," Jeremy said, shaking his hand. "Yes, I've met Lynette. Hi Lynette, Beverly, all of you guys."

“Hey you blokes, we need to head back now,” Jeanette said fifteen minutes later, looking at her mobile.

They left the shop and began their walk back to the school. They hadn't gone very far, just past two store-fronts, when the three guys who had been in the pizza shop appeared from an alley, joined by a fourth guy. They began taunting the group and making threats, then one guy moved close to them and started to push Tom, who had shifted over to stand in front of the girls. Jeremy had moved to Tom's side and when the first guy began to push Tom, a second guy tried to throw a punch at Jeremy.

It was all over in just a few seconds. Jeremy moved like lightning and then two of the guys were writhing on the ground. Meanwhile, Tom's response was a bit slower but almost as effective; he had simply picked up the guy who tried to push him and used him as a club to clobber the second one, knocking him down; then he threw his human club into the clobbered one lying on the pavement. Neither of those two guys were moving either.

Someone in the small gathering crowd of bystanders had called the police, and the commotion had alerted the pizza shop manager, who came out and told Jeremy and Tom to wait and that he'd deal with the police to tell them about what had happened inside the shop. While they waited for the authorities, Tom and Jeremy compared fighting styles.

“Shit, man, you got no finesse,” Jeremy joked. “I felt like I was fighting alongside of the Hulk! You just picked up the one bloke and used him to clobber the other one.”

“Hey guy, I don't got your moves, but sometimes brute force works. Also I don't need as much room to work as you do with your flying legs and twists.”

“Yeah, but that goon must weigh over 14 stone!”

“Um, isn't that about, ah, 90 kilos? Yeah... I can clean and jerk 125, though. Having big hands helps.”

“Tom, if you ever want to learn taekwondo, let me know. I think you'd be brilliant at it.”

“Hey, thanks, buddy, I just might. You weren't even breathing hard after doing those two, and I saw how Amelia just stuffed that idiot who tried to put a move on her.”

The police soon arrived and called for medical assistance for the injured assailants. After getting the details of the assault from the shop manager, Jeremy, Tom, the girls, and some bystanders, the police concluded that the schoolkids were the intended victims of an assault. Tom and Jeremy had to give their identification information and then they were all allowed to go.

On the way back to school, Jeremy and Tom continued their discussion.

“Damn, I still can't get over how Amelia did that number on the guy who tried to grab her,” Tom commented. “She said you taught her—then seeing you in action; shit, man, you were just scary.”

Jeremy grinned. “Years of training. Muscle memory. I taught Amelia 'cause she told me that she never wanted to feel helpless again. You know how we met, right? It's a school legend.”

“Sure do. I also heard how you two got the whole stupid naked program stopped here. No, everywhere in the country, right?”

“Almost. It’s practically gone now, but Amelia and I only helped the two most wonderful people on the planet to get it done. Say, we’ll need to get together with you and Lynette and we’ll tell you the whole story. And I’d like to hear your story—Lynette had mentioned to Amelia something about an ambush you blokes were in?”

Tom nodded. “Yeah. Let’s get together.”

They had arrived back at the school. Two of their group were explaining to the director why they had returned late.

Tom continued, “Oops, gotta get back to the rehearsal. Talk about it later.”

Jeremy waved at him. “Sure. I’ll be waiting for Amelia. I’m her ride home. You blokes need a lift home?”

Tom smiled. “Hey. Sure, that would be nice.”

The group was rehearsing the middle numbers from Act One, “Behold the Lord High Executioner” and “As Some Day it May Happen,” both requiring the men’s chorus, and “Comes a Train of Little Ladies,” “Three Little Maids from School Are We,” and “So Please You, Sir, We Much Regret,” where the girls and the girls’ chorus were featured. Everyone was still trying to keep a straight face when the Ko-Ko was delivering his patter song, which was about “keeping a little list” about people “who’ll not be missed”—people he had on his execution list. Danny, the Ko-Ko, and Mrs Dixon had come up with additional lyrics which, following a long tradition, lampooned some of the current political figures and with Danny’s madcap delivery of the lines, the other cast members were having a difficult time keeping from laughing.

Eventually the rehearsal ended and everyone began preparing to leave. Tom and Lynette, together with Amelia, went to the auditorium door as Jeremy came back in.

“My dear, and my new friends, our chariot awaits,” Jeremy intoned with a sweeping bow.

Lynette giggled as Tom stared at him, then Amelia. “Does he do that a lot?” he asked her, his eyes twinkling.

“Only every day,” Amelia declared as she grabbed Jeremy’s arm. “He’s an awful romantic but I’ll keep him.”

Jeremy led them to the front of the school where a large sedan was waiting. He opened the back door.

“Plenty of room for all,” he declared, as they began climbing in. “Tell Mr Jones where you live,” he requested.

Tom gave his address and turned to Jeremy with a questioning look.

“Yah, don’t ask. It’s not widely known, but I’m a diplomatic brat and I get a security detail, so

this ride's paid for," he joked. "But I'm guessing that Mr Jones didn't need you to tell him your address—am I right?"

Jones, pulling away from the school, laughed. "Got it in one, Jeremy. We already have your profiles, Tom and Lynette. You're Canadian, born in Toronto to be exact; went to school last year in Friern Barnet; the prior year you were in Munich. Mr Armstrong is the vice president of international operations of Barkshire Bank at their home office downtown. Mrs Armstrong is an interior designer and works as a private contractor with local realty agents. Tom has an older brother, Andrew, who goes to UCL."

"Holy sh..." Tom muttered. "Is this some kind of espionage..."

"Ha ha," Amelia giggled. "Jeremy did this to me too. His dad is a big shot at the U.S. embassy but please don't mention this to other people. Jeremy had to get you guys checked out when we realized that Lynette and I were getting really friendly. I'm so glad that Tom and Jeremy seem to like each other too..."

Jeremy laughed. "Yeah, I guess we bonded over a matter of our damsels' honor. Nothing like a good fight to cement bonds of fellowship."

"What's this? Jeremy, were you in a fight?" Jones asked.

Jeremy answered. "Yeah. I was going to tell you. Four guys—no, first two?" Amelia nodded. "Two guys tried to make a move on Amelia and Lynette in a pizza shop before I got there and then they were joined by two more outside when we all left. Tom and I had to teach them some manners. Gave the bobbies my contact info."

"Okay. We'll contact the MPS tomorrow and get it sorted," Jones replied. "Were any press there?"

"No... about four locals, I guess, and the shop manager. There were a few of our classmates and some other people in the shop too but no one else got involved," Jeremy replied.

They arrived at Tom's and Lynette's home and they left the car, making arrangements to get together that Friday after school.

## Chapter 17

When they got inside their home, their parents were watching TV.

“Hi, Mom, Dad,” Lynette called.

Tom echoed her, “Hi.”

Angela asked, “How did the rehearsal go?”

Tom chuckled. “Mostly okay but Dixon is still annoyed with us cracking up every time Danny pulls another funny stunt in his ‘Little List’ number. She wants us to look surprised, not to laugh.”

Lynette remarked, “The numbers I’m in are really coming together. I just *adore* Amelia, though; she’s so good at her part and a really hard worker too. And damn, she sure can protect herself, too,” she finished, chuckling.

“Protect? How?” Duncan asked.

The siblings related the incident at the pizza shop.

“So Jeremy told the cops that he’d be their primary contact if they needed any more info,” Tom said, “and it looks like his dad is an embassy bigwig—the U.S. embassy. We got a ride home from Jeremy’s... I guess it’s his bodyguard or something. They did a background check on our family.”

“Wait... wait—one thing at a time,” Duncan objected. “So you’re both okay, right?”

They nodded.

“And the police might call us about the assault.”

Lynette said, “Yeah, but Jeremy’s security guy told him that they’d take care of the police report.”

Duncan nodded. “And what’s the deal about a background check?”

Lynette shrugged. “Looks like after I started to hang with Amelia after we began to rehearse together, Jeremy had us checked out. He said that their embassy security people needed to know about their friends. He said it was routine and Amelia’s other friends all have been checked too.”

Duncan looked at Angela, who smiled back at him. Then she looked at the teens. “Looks like you guys are hobnobbing with the upper crust now,” she grinned. “Aren’t they both British knights? Do you have to bow to them?”

“Oh, Mom!” Lynette laughed. “They’re both the nicest kids! On the way home they asked us if we wanted to get together after school on Friday. So we are. And Tom’s talking about studying martial arts with Jeremy.”

“That sounds nice for you,” Angela commented. “So... You guys hungry? Leftovers are in the

fridge.”

“No, Mom,” they chorused.

“Still got some homework, Mom,” Lynette told her as she pulled Tom along with her to their room.

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Rehearsals continued after school for the rest of the week as the musical was approaching its performance dates. Now, with a week to go before the dress rehearsals, the cast began working with a small orchestra consisting of twenty of the school's strings, woodwinds, brass, and percussion musicians, replacing the rehearsal pianist. Jeremy, one of the trumpet principals, was in the show's orchestra. Because the group had a full-cast rehearsal on Saturday morning, there was none scheduled after school on Friday. Jeremy had arranged for Tom and Lynette to meet him at the door to the staff car park.

As they arrived at the door, Jeremy was walking up from a different direction. “Hi there,” he called. “We're meeting Amelia at her home. She had to go to her Foundation office an hour ago.”

The siblings were puzzled. “Her office?” Lynette wondered.

Jeremy smiled. “Oh yeah. Amelia's got a secret identity too. She's a project director in her dad's—actually it's Kevin's—foundation. Her dad's the head finance guy there. She'll tell you about it.”

They went outside and got into Jeremy's car, driven by Mr Jones again.

He welcomed them, “Hi there, Jeremy, Lynette, Tom. Nice seeing you kids again. Buckle in and we're off.”

“Hello, Mr Jones,” they chorused.

Tom glanced at the driver and then Jeremy. “Hey, any word about those blokes who messed with us?”

Mr Jones snorted, “Yeah, tell him, Jeremy.”

“They all have records,” Jeremy said. “They were on probation from juvenile court so their attack on us was a probation violation. They're off the street now and that's all we could find out.”

Jones continued, “Actually we could get more info on them but there's no point. I did hear that they really wanted to get back at Amelia and Lynette. You two gals really hurt them—mostly in their pride, it appears, so good job there,” he grinned. “I know that Jeremy's got excellent martial arts abilities, Tom. Jeremy told me about how you handled two of those thugs. You're a big fella for what? Sixteen, right?”

“Lynette and I just turned seventeen last week,” Tom told him. “I got my dad's genes. He's a big guy; played basketball in college and was All-Canada his senior year.”

“You play basketball too? Or with your build, rugby?”

“Nah,” Tom said, “not a fan of team sports. My big brother plays socc... ah, football; he’s pretty good, too. I like cycling and running. I do cross country.”

Jeremy laughed. “My sport isn’t allowed in school. They consider it to be too violent.”

Tom looked at him questioningly.

“My taekwondo. It’s mostly defensive. But the postures and movements are quite aerobic.”

Tom chuckled. “Oh yeah. I certainly saw that.”

They arrived at a fairly large house and pulled into the driveway.

“Where are we?” Lynette asked. “This is a lovely area. All the parks around.”

Jeremy nodded. “It’s Beckenham. The Bank of Scotland has a field here and there’s a cricket club, a big school, a park... These are really expensive homes. Amelia’s really lucky; Kevin gave her dad and stepmom a really nice wedding gift. I heard this house was on the market for three million quid. Last year her dad married Kevin’s honorary aunt, she’s the president of his foundation. C’mon in, ya gotta see the house; it’s amazing.”

They went to the door and Amelia opened it and rushed into Jeremy’s arms.

“Hi sweetie,” she said as she kissed him. “Hi guys, glad you could come. We first thought that we’d go to a restaurant but then I had to go to my office, so I thought we could just hang out here. Can you stay for dinner?”

Tom looked at Lynette and they nodded to each other. Lynette answered, “Yeah, we told our folks we’d be with you and not to hold dinner in case we did go out. That’s no imposition on you?”

“Oh, not at all. Come to the kitchen; I’ve set out tea for us. We’ll have a cuppa and then I’ll show you around.”

They walked to the kitchen and Lynette looked around and gasped. One whole wall of the kitchen opened into a garden—almost like a greenhouse—filled with tropical plants and several fountains. Nearby she could make out a small lagoon; the sounds of moving water could be heard.

“Oh, this is gorgeous,” she breathed.

Amelia flushed. “My mom... stepmom actually, but I think of her like my mom. She designed this to be like her home in Jakarta. She moved here with Dad when the Coris Foundation moved to London.”

“Oh yeah, Amelia,” Tom said, “Jeremy mentioned you have a foundation office?”

“Yeah. Tell you in a bit. Okay, guys,” she responded. “Jeremy and I like you both. Lynette, you and I have really bonded over the show, and I guess with all of us fighting evil assailants

together, first you and me and then Tom and Jeremy ...”

All four laughed at that.

“...well, Jeremy and I met after he clobbered a thug who was trying to strip me on the school's stage when that Naked in School rot started up. Ugh. That's actually how Kevin and Denise met too, when their naked thing started for them in their school. So I guess the fighting stuff is a good sign that we should be friends, right?”

Tom smiled at her. “Well, I've had some... um... fights... where things didn't really work out...”

Amelia shot a pouting expression at him. “This is different; I can tell, Tom. Jeremy and I can kinda feel people's vibes, you know? Kevin called it qi, it's a person's aura. Have you heard of it?”

Lynette nodded and Tom responded, “Jeremy told me about it when we were talking about my studying his martial arts. He said you develop sensitivity to feeling it by meditating.”

“Exactly. So you and Lynette, you both seem to have that same aura—a feeling about you that we felt in Kevin and Denise, and we also noticed the same in the newest Avery mentors, Julie and Harry...”

She noticed a start of recognition in Lynette's and Tom's faces.

“... oh, they're in your year, right? You know them?”

“Sure,” Lynette said. “We were on that summer program with them too.”

“Oh, that's right,” Amelia nodded, “Yeah. They did mention that.”

“You keep in touch?” Tom asked.

“Sure. They're Avery mentors. Jeremy and I train the mentors. That was our role here when Kevin and Denise were setting up the Avery Program.”

“Wow... this is deep...” Tom mused. “You keep mentioning them. Kevin and Denise. I hear people say their names around school with... um... a kind of reverence. What did they do...?”

Jeremy interrupted, “...they did *everything*! They got that infernal naked program stopped in America and then came over here and did the same here. Well, they had help, but still. They were the force that made it happen. Kevin was my taekwondo teacher in Korea when I was maybe nine and ten years old. I studied with him when our parents were working together in the South Korean embassy. It's a really long story, but you should hear it, because I think you're gonna get to be part of it, in some way. I just feel it. Amelia, can you answer Tom's first question? About your foundation office.”

She chuckled. “So Kevin has his hands in everything. He's the head of his foundation—it's called the Coris Foundation, an NGO, a non-governmental organization. It used to be in Jakarta, Indonesia, but it's moved here now. Kevin's dad got really rich—I mean really, REALLY rich, from the dot-com boom at the beginning of the century and he cashed in before the bust, then

went off to the Far East to do humanitarian stuff. He set up this foundation in Southeast Asia to help poor people with legal and medical problems. Then a few years ago, Kevin's parents were killed in a random terrorist bombing and Kevin inherited everything but he kept the Foundation going.

"Anyway, my dad was hired to do the Foundation's financial stuff 'cuz it was getting bigger, and Kevin's Aunt Janet—um, not his real aunt but he calls her that; now she's my stepmum—she was the executive director. She's the president now and chief operating officer. Last year in school, some of us girls were really concerned about the naked program starting 'cuz a number of us had that awful genital mutilation cutting done to us—ever hear of FGM?"

Tom and Lynette nodded, both listening spellbound.

"I was cut too when I was living in Jakarta after my mum died—my aunt—my mum's sister-in-law—tricked me, basically kidnapped me and brought me to a cutting ceremony thing. Poppa was warned by my school and he rescued me before they could finish, but I still was left with a painful injury that didn't heal properly. I came to London last year to get it operated on and now I'm much better—almost normal. So a bunch of us girls at school got together and began working on an anti-FGM project. Jeremy heard about it and began putting the information we collected about it in a human rights blog he was doing and the press began picking up our information. He's still writing that blog, actually. It covers all the unfair stuff the government does to innocent people. Sometimes the tabloids will pick up something he writes about, but we've tried to keep secret who writes the blog 'cuz of Jeremy's embassy ties. Anyway, the FGM data we collected for England that he put in his blog, we used as part of our campaign to help convince the British government to stop the Naked in School Program here..."

Lynette interrupted, "I heard that's why the Queen knighted you and Jeremy."

Amelia blushed. "Yeah. Also Kevin and Denise, but yeah. I didn't do all that much..."

Jeremy laid his hand on hers. "Don't be so modest, darling. Your work was amazing." He turned to the siblings. "Amelia also came up with the idea about how the Naked in School Program and FGM were similar—analogous actually—and how they were both like torture for the kids involved. She convinced the PM—you know, the prime minister, and her cabinet officials too, and made them see it that way."

The two teens looked at Amelia in awe.

Amelia waved her hand at him to say "enough"; then she continued, "So when the Coris Foundation moved here to London and got set up, Kevin gave us several million quid to fund a new program to educate people emigrating to here from Africa and Asia about the evils of FGM. He picked me to be one of the program directors, and you may know these girls from school, my assistants are Sarya Mboto, Darra Sekibo, Estelle LeBonet, and Mariama Galina. They, also two other African girls who've since moved away, did a huge job on starting up our anti-FGM project last year while the whole school was resisting taking part in the Naked in School thing. We do anti-FGM outreach in London; I've learned that there are quite a few groups here that still follow

that awful practice and send children back to their villages in Africa to have them cut.”

“I know two of the girls, Darra and Estelle,” Lynette said. “I didn’t know that they were doing that.”

“Yeah, it’s really nice ‘cuz we can pay them; their families can really use the extra money,” Amelia commented. “So that’s the story about my office. I spend about six hours a week there. It’s a good thing I get some school credit for that, ‘cuz it’s a real time commitment.”

Jeremy looked at the siblings. “So you probably heard all about how Amelia and I met.”

Lynette giggled, “It’s kinda like a school legend already. The knight riding in to rescue his damsel.”

“Yeah, but it’s funny that I didn’t even know her then, since my folks knew Kevin and Denise and Amelia was living with them. Do you know the back-story?” Jeremy asked.

They shook their heads.

Jeremy told them about how he had come to the aid of a girl who was being attacked on the school’s stage. He didn’t know that she was the ward of his boyhood mentor, Kevin, and found out about Kevin’s and Amelia’s relationship only after the school incident, when the police had arrived to do the investigation.

“And that’s when I learned about how Kevin and Denise had met,” he finished. “Eerily, it’s an almost identical story to ours in lots of ways.”

Then Jeremy and Amelia told the siblings about how Kevin, Denise, and their college friends had managed to get the Naked in School Program in the States so discredited that it was essentially terminated everywhere, and then Jeremy told them about how Amelia and he had assisted Kevin and Denise in getting the Program derailed in the U.K.

He laughed, “You know, when she was talking to the U.S. president, the PM accused Kevin and Denise of having exported the colonies’ rebellion back to Britain!”

They all laughed at that. Tom asked, “I hope that no one was threatening reopening hostilities over that rebellion, were they?”

More laughter.

Then Jeremy looked at Tom and Lynette. “I know that you guys went to another school before coming here and I heard that you switched schools because of the Program. Did you have a bad experience with it?”

Tom sighed. “Trust him to ask the tough ones.”

Lynette shrugged. “That’s not an easy question to answer—but not ‘cause we want to be evasive. Neither of us wound up having to be in the Program, but being in school with the Program going on was definitely um... shitty... or worse. Not that it was as bad as we heard happened at other schools, but it was disruptive and ruined both Tom’s and my social experiences in getting used to

school here in England. Neither of us socialized much.”

Amelia nodded. “Ah, is that the reason you two are kinda like an ‘item’?” She made finger quotes.

Lynette blushed, then giggled. “Actually, no, it isn’t, although our being close helped us cope with that miserable school experience. I haven’t told many people about us—just Roberta in year eleven—you know her?”

Amelia nodded. “She’s great friends with Julie, so yes, I do know her but not as well as Julie. Actually I have an eye on her and her boyfriend for mentor jobs but don’t say anything to her.”

“Well, I told Roberta this, in confidence. Tom and I, well, it’s true we’re brother and sister, but we aren’t really related. My mom married Tom’s dad. But Tom and I, we think we fell in love with each other even before they got married. We figured out years ago that we’re soulmates and that’s why we’ve never dated other kids.”

“Oh, that’s so sweet,” Amelia sighed. Then she sobered. “But a big part of love is the physical...” She stopped when she saw Lynette blush and look down. “Oh. You are... physical... sorry...”

“No, that’s okay,” Lynette assured her. “We aren’t exhibitionists and we don’t show any romantic affection for each other in public, but we’ve noticed kids’ve gotten curious about why neither of us date. I suppose that what the kids learn in the Avery Program about gossip and stuff—that’s helped in keeping the rumor mill silent, but even so, I’ve gotten some pointed questions lately. And some guys began hitting on me recently.”

Jeremy poked Tom in the arm. “I’m guessing your sister just told us the reason you bailed on your Avery class?”

Tom nodded ruefully. “Sorry that it seems like I dissed your Avery Program baby, but there was something about it—the forced intimacy, I guess, that rubbed me the wrong way. Lynette and I are so close, I couldn’t deal with the... bonding?—yeah. The bonding part.”

Amelia was looking at Tom intently now. “I’m trying to remember... something came up during the very first sessions we did. Let me think... Jeremy, remember those twins? They had a really hard time doing the bonding exercises, remember? Oh, maybe not. Yeah, their problem was that they had been abused when they were younger. So that’s not a similar situation. Anyway, the first bonding exercises are based on some touching exercises borrowed from a couple of sources—the hand touching comes from an old theater trick; it’s to loosen up actors who need to do a romantic scene and feel awkward about it. The other touching exercises come from techniques taken from different massage styles coupled with some meditation exercises. The kinds of touching we begin with are meant to stimulate the person’s emotions by caressing their skin; in massage they are to give pleasure and for therapy. Tom, why do you think that the Avery bonding stuff affected you so strongly?”

Tom was very reluctant to discuss this, but he made an effort to answer.

“Um... yeah, I thought it was because Lynette and I... we actually had been doing all that same stuff together for years while we were growing up. We'd sit together, sometimes in each other's laps, stroking each other's hands and arms, hugging each other, and talking together softly, for hours. When I had to do all that same stuff with a strange girl, it felt totally wrong. I felt nothing for her; that kind of touching is reserved for Lynette only and it's how I always showed her my love for her; I couldn't make myself do that with anyone else.”

Lynette broke in. “I hope I'm not breaking a confidence, but Roberta told me that she and Simon felt kinda that way too at first. They had some problems but somehow got used to doing it—but she said it took a few days for them to get totally comfortable.” She got a thoughtful look then. “Hey guys, I did have this thought. It seemed to me that the teachers were using a hypnotic tone during the session. That together with lots of repetition—do you use hypnosis or conditioning on the kids in the Avery class?”

“Oh no,” Amelia exclaimed. “Never. That's not ever been part of the Avery sessions and I've never observed a teacher doing that. If you saw that, then it was totally unintentional.”

Lynette nodded. “Okay, it was a thought.”

“No, they don't do that,” Amelia said, thoughtfully. “We asked the teachers to speak in a relaxing tone so maybe yours chose a delivery that seemed hypnotic. Anyway, getting back to what you said about bonding when you were younger, Tom, that makes total sense to me. Jeremy? What do you think?”

“Oh for sure. You know, I don't think we ever had a committed couple like the two of you before. At least no one with a history like yours. You blokes—it's like you're already married, you know?”

Tom nodded as Lynette blushed. She answered, “We've already told our folks that we want to be married. Mom said that they'd figure out a way to do it, but she told us not until we're out of school! We're hoping she doesn't mean university...” she giggled.

Jeremy chuckled, “I'll bet that your dropping out of the Avery class threw old Hanford into a tizzy. He's such a by-the-rules bloke. Didn't he try to get you into another group?”

Lynette nodded, “Not quite. He got a few of his experts together, he told Mom, and they decided that my folks should send Tom to a shrink to treat his ‘touch-shyness,’” she made finger quotes. “Give 'em credit; that's what the experts figured Tom had. But my folks knew about us; they knew how strongly we love each other, and no way were they gonna tell Hanford about that. So they told him that if the school wanted him to see a shrink, it would have to be on the school's nickle... um... is that a Brit expression? Penny? Farthing? Quid?”

They all laughed.

Tom shrugged. “So it was left that if Lynette or I should change our minds and want to do an Avery class, we should just step up and ask for it.”

Amelia got a dark expression. “Shit. That isn't how it works; they've gotten the wrong idea. The

Avery Program isn't about *individuals*, it's about *cohorts*! The group bonds as a group, or else there isn't anyone to fall back on for group support. It builds respect and acceptance among group members. It's not for learning a performance skill—it's getting into a frame of mind where you work for cooperation. To form cooperative teams. Teaching respect for all. Building maturity."

Jeremy looked at her in amusement. "There goes my Amelia, on her soapbox! She did that to the blokes on the National Program Committee and she lectured them till they were withering in their seats. Then she did it to a cabinet minister at a meeting we had with the PM and the U.S. president, and chastised him, making him apologize for his careless comment. Honey, you think you need to give Hanford a talk about their misconception?"

Amelia looked at him, steel in her eyes. "Damn straight, Jeremy. Him and all the teachers and counselors involved. Right after the musical is over, in fact, before the holidays." Her expression softened. "Hey, Tom, Lynette, I'll make sure your names aren't mentioned or even implied."

Tom gulped. "Wow, shit, Amelia, I'd hate to have you go after me like that..."

She walked over to Tom and hugged him.

"You're just a loveable ol' teddy bear, Tom. I see how Lynette could fall in love with a guy like you." She let him go. "Hey, let's take a tour of this palace. I've never lived anywhere so large, but Jeremy isn't all that impressed. He lives in the embassy residence. It's *really* huge."

Tom asked, "Jeremy, can I ask what your father does?"

"Sure. But don't gossip about it, okay? If people don't know, it makes security for me a bit simpler. Dad's the minister-counselor. That's like the operational head of the U.S. mission; his bosses are the ambassador to the U.K., the secretary of state, and the president."

"Wow. Heavy stuff..." Tom breathed.

"Sure is. One day I'll tell you how he got me out of trouble with the head teacher in *my* old school, where *I* got put into the Program."

They had been walking around the home as Amelia was showing them its features.

Tom stared at him. "*You* got put in the Program? Shit, I didn't know that. And you wrote all of those blog posts..."

Jeremy grinned at him. "Yep... and I just *know* I got selected because I was posting stuff about Program problems."

Tom muttered, "Damn. I know just how that happens... being targeted for the Program... oops..." he shut up, red faced.

Amelia stopped talking about the room they were in. "I sense an untold story here, Tom?" she asked.

"Unnhh... *nooo*..." he started.

Amelia came to him and took his hands in hers. "Come on, Tom, look at me," she urged.

Tom looked into her eyes and gulped.

"Come here." She led him over to a couch and pulled him down to sit next to her; he sat and looked down. She put both of her hands on his face and moved it up to look at her.

"You've got a deep, deep disturbance in your aura, your qi," she murmured. "I can feel something blocking your energies, Tom. Denise taught me how to read people; she's the most empathetic person I've ever met—she can even project her aura to others. I'm still trying to learn to do that as good as she can. But I feel something in you that needs... um, expression."

"Shit, Amelia, I don't know if I can talk about it... we promised... swore..."

Lynette dropped to her knees in front of Tom.

"Tom, darling, Amelia can help. She can keep our secrets—she told us her own very private story. You can tell her and Jeremy about us getting out of the Program."

Tom shuddered and looked at Amelia. He sighed. "Okay... Well... Yeah, they deliberately picked me to do the Program and that was in the first week when they were supposed to be selecting kids randomly. We found out later why they deliberately picked me."

Tom went on to describe his phobia about nudity and how the school's solution to "cure" him was to put him in the Program. With much prompting, he told them how he had wrecked the school office in his attempt to escape being stripped, and then how the school officials were blackmailed into exempting both him and Lynette, and how he had been isolated from Program participants for the rest of the school year. His audience was enthralled at hearing the story.

When his storytelling came to a halt, he was shaking, and Amelia hugged him again, rose and pushed Lynette into her seat.

"He needs you. Hold him," she told Lynette, who embraced a teary-eyed Tom.

He hugged her back and looked up, squared his shoulders, and spoke.

"Sorry I got emotional... telling that brought back some awful memories," he explained.

"Especially how I felt in the head teacher's room, trying to escape."

He stood up then and Amelia took his hands. "That was really brave of you to share your feelings, Tom, but that story was only part of what you have locked up inside of you. How long have you had that phobia? You weren't abused as a child, right? I don't sense that kind of anguish in you."

"Damn, Amelia, you're amazing, you know? Better than a lie detector," Tom grinned. "No, no abuse. But the problem goes back to even before my dad met Mom, I think. How did you ever learn to do that? Read people like you do."

She shrugged. "Kevin told us we all have that ability in us. Jeremy, you can do it too, right?"

He snorted. "Sure. Like a human swimmer keeps up with a dolphin. You're the dolphin—way ahead of what I can do, darling." He looked at the siblings. "Kevin is damn good too, but Denise is the superstar. Amelia learned from Denise."

Amelia laughed, "That's why I call her my sister, sweetie. We're really sisters somehow. Spiritually, anyway."

"And you've got her iron will and resolve too," Jeremy agreed. "Anyway, Tom, the answer for how to sense energies has a lot to do with learning some of the Eastern mental arts. Much of that goes along with learning taekwondo. We'll need to get you started learning how to do basic meditation; Lynette too. Amelia and I feel that you two have the potential to sense your own auras, to feel your energies, and learning that may open you up to sensing other people's auras."

Amelia was still holding Tom's hands. "And I feel that the way to help free up your energy flow is your learning what Kevin taught us, Tom. I feel an enormous strength inside you but it's blocked somehow. Work with Jeremy; he taught me meditation—also how to defend myself—but learning the meditation helped me see how Denise worked her magic."

The four kids stood silently together for a minute, just thinking; then Jeremy spoke.

"Okay, everyone, are we all good? I think we should just drop all the heavy stuff now and just chat."

Lynette sighed. "Yeah, good idea. I'm kinda drained too. That was intense."

Amelia pulled out her mobile and looked at it. "I think it's time. Yep. My folks'll be home in an hour and a half. Mom has a lady who comes in... ah, here she is. Mrs Johnson cooks dinner for us on weekdays."

The woman came in the door.

"Mrs Johnson, these are Lynette and Tom—I texted you that they'd be here for dinner," Amelia said.

"Yes, dearie, tha's jus' fine. Ah'll be in th' kitchen if'n ya need anythin'," she told them.

The four teens went into a room which housed a large-screen tv and sat in the comfortable chairs there and began to talk about their lives, family matters, trips, school tales, and other stories. Jeremy told about his two days in the Program and how the British prime minister had stopped Jeremy's head teacher from disciplining him for the stunt he had pulled in saving a Muslim girl's dignity.

Tom told them about the ambush that he and Lynette had experienced and related some of the tales that the kids from the residential school in the northern suburbs had told them, and all four agreed that British schools were much, much better off without the Program.

Eventually Amelia's parents, Janet and Elliot, arrived and Tom and Lynette were introduced. The siblings were charmed by her parents who were likewise impressed by the siblings. During dinner the group discussed a wide variety of topics, but the conversation kept returning to the

upcoming musical. Elliot was looking forward with great anticipation to seeing his daughter in the show since he couldn't be at her performance the prior year where she had starred in the play "Our Town." He had to make do with watching a video recording of the play.

Soon the evening came to an end, and Tom and Lynette left with Jeremy, whose driver dropped them off at their home. The two were pretty wiped out after the emotional afternoon, so they went to sleep early.

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The three performances of "The Mikado" were a great success. Lynette found that she really enjoyed performing before an audience; her character was intended to give a comic element to the plotting of the two "noblemen" co-conspirators in the second act, and she had great fun in portraying the naive young girl in backing up the "noblemen's" assertions to the emperor. Tom also enjoyed his part and the bit of slapstick humor that the chorus members could do. Ko-Ko's patter song, "I Have a Little List," received plenty of laughs, and on the final day, the audience demanded an encore of that number. Then the holiday break came.

Amelia fulfilled her promise of meeting with the head teacher, the counselor, and the Avery teachers, and lectured them about how they seemed to have forgotten the primary purpose of that program, that the emphasis was in group dynamics and not personal performance or learning a kind of skill.

During the holidays, Tom and Lynette began going with Jeremy to Jeremy's dojo and started taking an elementary taekwondo course. The two siblings also began to work with Jeremy and another taekwondo teacher on learning about meditation. When school resumed, the siblings continued their lessons, weekly now, and were practicing their meditation every day.

Tom was running in the school's cross-country meets and finishing with respectable times, generally in fourth or fifth place in his races. Amelia was busy in rehearsals for another play, "Almost, Maine," and had talked Lynette into auditioning for a supporting role, which she got. Jeremy was performing in the orchestra and the concert band, and Tom and Lynette sang in a choral concert. In all, they were quite busy for the first couple of months of the spring term and the four only got to socialize together infrequently, generally on double dates.

## Chapter 18

One Saturday in early March was the first time that Amelia and Jeremy could get together with Lynette and Tom for more than an evening's date. At a rehearsal they had together earlier that week, Amelia had told Lynette that she had gotten an idea for Lynette and Tom to try with Jeremy and herself.

She told Lynette, "You know, when Kevin and Denise were trying to get our school to resist having to run the Naked in School Program last year, they had come up with the idea that the program they had worked on at Avery University could be used here. So they got Jeremy and me to be their guinea pigs to see how it could work."

Amelia went on to briefly describe what they had done in that session where Kevin and Denise had led them through some touching and massage exercises. She thought it wise to skip over the erotic parts, however.

"Ask Tom if he'd be willing to do it with you, now that both of you've had some practice in meditation. Maybe you and he, when you do a kind of joint meditation together, can sense your own—or even each other's—auras."

Later at home that day, Lynette asked Tom what he thought about Amelia's idea.

"Sure, it sounds like I could handle that, no problem," he answered.

"Well, there's something else," Lynette told him. "She said the stuff they did with Kevin and Denise were while wearing... ah, brief clothing."

"Umm, how brief?"

"A P.E. kit? Just shorts and tank top?" she answered.

"Well, okay, I guess. I wear that to run, you know."

"Sweetie—*just* shorts and tank for you. No undies. I'll be in shorts and bikini top."

"Oh, wow. I don't know... maybe... just the four of us?"

"Well, sure. You okay with it?"

"What the hell," Tom sighed. "We'll all still be covered, I guess. I wonder what she has in mind...?"

"It's stuff that Kevin and Denise had done with their group at Avery University, she said, when they were working with some high school kids there. Amelia told me that she and Jeremy loved that session they did together, and they had only known each other two weeks then."

"That's fine," Tom nodded. "I'm good."

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Jeremy's car stopped at the siblings' home and Jeremy hopped out to get them. When he got to

their door, Tom opened it.

“Got your kits?” he asked and Tom lifted to display the little duffel he was carrying.

Tom and Lynette left the house, locked it, and accompanied Jeremy to the car where they climbed into it; Mr Jones was again driving.

Lynette greeted him, “Morning, Mr Jones. Say, got a question. I’ve been thinking,” she smiled, “you’re in security and...”

Jones laughed. “I know your question, miss. You’re gonna ask if my partner is Mr Smith.”

Lynette giggled. “Um. Yeah.”

Jones nodded, grinning. “Well, no, I actually don’t have a partner named Smith, but,” he raised a finger, “I work in the Diplomatic Security Service section where our military intelligence attaché is named Smith. It’s Major Martha Smith. Does that count?”

Everyone laughed.

Jones went on, “We do get kidded about our names, actually. But I tell people that I’m careful never to wear all black clothes.”

The kids’ laughing increased.

When they arrived at Amelia’s house, she greeted them and led them down to the lower level, to a room which was fixed up like a little gym with a large open area in the center. On the floor were two large padded mats and there were a number of fat candles flickering around them. The scent of vanilla was in the air and soft music played in the background. Amelia was wearing a light tropical wrap which covered her shoulders and hung down to below her knees.

“Okay, you can get your kits off now and change into your P.E. duds,” Amelia told them. “The loo is over in the corner. Remember, we’re going commando for this.”

“Um, Amelia,” Tom said, “Lynette told me what you said about what we’re doing, but why do we need such brief outfits? It’s not like what we wore for the Avery class.”

She smiled. “It’s ‘cuz we need to show you stuff about enhancing the body’s sensitivity. That helps in focusing when we do the meditating part. Having too many clothes on blocks the energies from circulating freely. You okay with that?”

Tom shrugged, then said, “Sure... so far, anyway.”

They all got changed, taking turns in the bathroom, and Amelia slipped her wrap off after they had all joined her.

“We’ll begin with one of the first exercises in the Avery class,” Amelia instructed, “it’s part of the beginning bonding exercises. The hand-stroking part. You tried doing this, Tom, but you didn’t have any reaction to it, from what I heard. This exercise is all about sensual touching without any sexual contact and it usually results in very close feelings. Actors are taught to do

this to get familiar with someone they don't really know who's playing in a romantic scene with them. So do you remember how to do this? You sit cross-legged with your knees touching and your eyes are closed. Tom, take Lynette's right hand in both of yours and feel it all over; try to memorize what it feels like. Run your fingers over the back, the palms, and the fingers, while you relax and try to fix in your mind how her hand feels. Then you switch hands. After that, we'll switch it around and Lynette will touch your hands. Okay, you can start."

When they were done, Amelia asked them how it felt. "Tom, did that feel any different than with your Avery partner?"

Tom chuckled ruefully. "Like in a different universe... You know, Amelia, that Lynette and I've been stroking each other's hands just like that since like forever, right?"

"You did mention that, actually," she agreed.

"Before we even knew about the kissing and groping that teens do, Tom and I would sit like this and hold and stroke each other's hands," Lynette commented.

"Okay, we'll move to a bit later in the Avery class exercises," Amelia went on, "This part comes a bit after where you had to run out, Tom. You left when you had to sit very close to your partner. This part comes later in the class but you should be okay, since you're doing this with Lynette. This exercise is where we really ramp up making a connection between the partners and it's supposed to heighten your sensing of your body and also your partner's. Watch how Jeremy and I kneel, facing each other, and then copy us."

They knelt face to face, an arm's length apart, and stared into each other's eyes. Amelia glanced over at Tom and Lynette and saw that they had shifted into the same position.

"Next, Tom, put your right hand over Lynette's heart; Lynette, do the same thing with Tom. Look into each other's eyes and begin to do your meditation breathing, but keep aware of your partner's breathing and breathe together. Try to let yourself feel each other's aura—see if you can sense your partner's energy. Let's spend several minutes doing that. Just meditate and try to feel any energy flowing. After you spend several minutes doing that, see if you can project your feelings about each other using your eyes and whatever internal energy you feel you can pull up. Okay?"

They both grunted in affirmation and began concentrating. They spent about five minutes doing that and then Amelia spoke again. They both jumped a little in surprise when she broke their concentration.

"Feel anything, guys?" she asked.

Tom whispered, "Yeah... Kinda like a little string... a ribbon... wisp of smoke? inside me that seemed to connect to outside me. And in Lynette's eyes, kinda like a feeling that I was falling into them."

"Oh, good," Amelia enthused. "Lynette?"

“Something like that, I guess. But I felt something different from Tom, like a big soft wave almost ready to crash over me...”

“Wonderful... Tom, I think you were projecting to Lynette, and she was making a connection too,” Amelia gushed. She continued, “The next step’s more intense. We don’t do this part in the Avery sessions ‘cuz it’s way too intimate, but it can really help make partners open to each other. You move a bit closer now and close your eyes. Now, as you meditate, use your palms to gently stroke each other’s chests. Feel the shape of each other’s chest by moving your hands all around, slowly up and down, across and around, all the while paying attention to their breathing. Try to sense how your partner feels. Open your minds to any thoughts and sensations that pop up.”

They began doing that, but then Lynette grunted, “Not working. Can I?” She slipped her hands under Tom’s tank top and began stroking his bare chest. “Better.”

Tom breathed, “It’s okay.”

Amelia glanced over and nodded to herself. “Lynette has the right idea, Tom,” she murmured. “Touch as much skin as you can and let your hands follow your partner’s curves.”

Lynette paused stroking Tom. “Your hands keep catching on my top, Tom. Can I take it off? Amelia, is that okay to do?”

Amelia asked, “You okay with that, Tom?”

He nodded absently, his eyes still closed, as Lynette quickly shed her top. They continued to caress each other’s chests for several minutes and then Amelia spoke again.

“You’re still breathing for each other, right? Keep listening to each other’s breathing; try to imagine that you’re breathing for them. Use your meditation breathing and try to sense the energies flowing around you. Now while you’re doing that, here’s the next step. Try to put yourself in your partner’s body. Imagine, Tom, that Lynette’s stroking your boobies, you have a girl’s chest instead of your own chest. Use your recollection of how her breasts felt in your hands, feel her hands on you, and let your imagination become your reality. Lynette, do the same. Try to put yourself in Tom’s body. Don’t force anything; just let your thoughts glide along while you keep up the breathing. Let’s keep meditating and breathing for each other for a while.”

They spent about five minutes doing that and then Amelia broke the silence again.

“Now see if you can do this: as you stroke each other, cup your hands a bit and imagine you’re drawing a little bit of energy out of each other’s body to hold in your palm. See if you can feel it gathering there, as you caress each other.”

After several minutes, Lynette gasped softly. “I felt like a tingling in my hand! This is so cool!”

“Good, now keep it up,” Amelia whispered.

A few minutes later, Amelia broke the silence. “Tom, did you feel anything?”

“Not sure; maybe a little tingle like Lynette said. But I did feel something like a warm sensation

washing over my head and chest toward the end. And suddenly it flowed all over me and I got... err... hot... oh, god..."

Amelia looked at him and softly cheered, "Hey... sweet," and giggled.

Lynette looked down at the front of Tom's shorts and saw a distinct bulge projecting there. She giggled too.

Then Amelia laughed. "Guys, you're brill, you're really getting it. You're sensing each other and that's showing up in physical reactions in both of you—Tom especially. Let's see if we can build on that now. Kevin showed us how to do this and told us it's from a tantric exercise—Jeremy and I think it's pretty intense. Still on your knees, you'll need to get your bodies as close as possible but don't touch each other. Keep your torsos erect, like in a straight line from your chin to your knees. Watch how Jeremy does it."

Jeremy knee-walked up very close to Amelia and circled his arms around her as in a hug, but without touching her anywhere, while he moved his head so that the left side of his face almost touched Amelia's cheek; his lips were next to her ear.

"See? Can you copy that?"

Tom muttered, "Yeah," and moved into the same position.

Amelia looked and was satisfied. "Now try not to touch. And keep your eyes closed. What you do now is your meditation breathing, deep and slow, and follow along with each other's breathing, like you're breathing for your partner. Remember that the special breathing that you do in meditation is to help stimulate the body's energy flows. Keep making believe that you're breathing for each other. And try to keep your arms up—that takes concentration. Let me know when your arms get tired."

A little over five minutes later, Tom sat back on his heels. "Oofff!" he sighed. "Enough!"

Amelia looked at him. "Get tired?"

"No... that was... wow... I didn't get tired at the end but I had this intense desire to hug Lynette, like I was becoming part of her..."

Lynette glanced down at Tom and got a huge smile. "Honey, another part of you liked doing that too. I felt that thing brushing against me."

Tom blushed as he tried to hide the large bulge that was tenting the front of his shorts.

Amelia said, "Let's switch, then Lynette can tell us how it felt. Lynette, do the same position, okay?"

Lynette took the pose and they kept the posture for about five minutes again before she sat back with a sigh. Her face and upper body were flushed.

Jeremy grinned at her. "I see you felt something, Lynette. Did you make a connection with Tom?"

Lynette shuddered. “Damn. The strain of not being able to touch... Shit, that was like... well, kinda like sex foreplay, you know? My body is... pulsing. It felt like Tom and I were merging somehow...”

When Lynette pulled away, Tom groaned and shifted his legs to hide the tent in his shorts.

“A bit horny, Tom?” Jeremy grinned. “That’s how tantra works. It really builds up the energies and sexual energies are the strongest, but freeing them up like we’re doing lets us tap the energies easier.”

Tom was sweating perceptibly now and Lynette whispered in his ear, “Can you take your top off?”

He looked up and first became aware that he had been facing away from the other couple for a while now. Glancing behind him at Jeremy and Amelia, he noticed for the first time that Lynette—no, *all* of them were topless! His mind spun and a million thoughts raced through it. But then he realized that he was kneeling right there with them next to him and their partial nudity hadn’t affected him at all; in fact, it seemed somehow right to be unclothed like that. He pulled off his top.

Amelia glanced at him. “Tom, you still okay so far?”

He nodded jerkily.

“Good. Jeremy, wanna lead them now? Seated embrace and then massage?” Amelia asked. “This feels so good I won’t be able to speak.”

Lynette giggled.

Jeremy answered, “Sure, darling. Okay, now, Tom, move around and sit behind Lynette with your chest against her back. Lynette, lean back against Tom.”

They did.

“Now this works like the other exercises with doing the breathing and touch. In the Avery classes, we do something sorta like this but not as intense. Tom, you wrap your arms around Lynette and gently rest your hands on the top part of her breasts. Lynette, put your hands on the backs of Tom’s hands. Keep your eyes closed and lean into each other, listening for each other’s heartbeat and breathe together. Let your thoughts flow together. Sense each other’s breathing and heartbeats. Pull into each other and try to sense each other’s energies.”

After a while, Jeremy told them to relax. “One of the best ways to help the body’s energies circulate is by using massage. There are all types of massages that are done—some are sexual, but most are therapeutic or sensual. Um, Amelia honey, is the oil all set?”

“Warming in the pan in the sink,” she said, and got up and fetched the pan of water. “The oil is to lubricate your skin ‘cuz it makes it easier to slide your hands. Also it helps to make a sensual feeling.”

She put the pan down between the mats and sat down again in front of Jeremy. There were two squirt bottles in the pan.

Jeremy took a bottle and handed it to Tom. "Take this and keep it near. You need to use plenty of oil. First we'll do a hand massage and for this, let's stay seated like we were. Lynette, just lean back again. Tom, get some oil and take Lynette's right hand in yours—then with your left hand, spread the oil slowly all over the back of her hand, over her palm and each of her fingers. Massage her hand and fingers and use slow, deliberate movements. Switch hands when you're done."

Tom worked on Lynette's hands for several minutes and then Jeremy told them to change around, Lynette should massage Tom's hands.

"Feel nice?" Jeremy asked after several minutes and looked at the couple, who seemed to be completely zoned out.

"Uh. Oh," Tom grunted. "Wow, that was... amazing."

"Yeah, really," Lynette agreed.

Amelia giggled, "Oh, it's ace that your tops are off 'cuz we can do the seated massage properly now. Tom, back up just a tiny bit and get your palms wet with oil. Now put them on Lynette's arms and rub them up to her shoulders, down her sides, around her tummy, up her chest, and back to the arms. Cover her whole front and sides with oil as you massage her gently. Just press in but softly, and move slowly. You never hurry in a massage. Let's do this for a while. Keep your hands wet with oil."

Soon Lynette was cooing and sighing as Tom sensuously stroked her.

After several minutes, Jeremy began speaking. "Now we'll shift to her back. Lynette, you'll need to budge forward a tad so Tom can massage your back. Tom, you'll do her whole back. Take lots of oil and start at her shoulders. Then slide your hands down her sides, go across her lower back, and then up, a hand on each side of her spine. Don't rub right on top of the spine itself. Use a bit more pressure than you used on her front and keep your hands moving steadily and firmly. Cover her whole back—you can change directions once or twice too. Do about ten rounds, okay?"

After Tom had worked on Lynette's back for a few minutes, Jeremy saw that she was totally relaxed with her eyes closed; her arms hung loosely from her shoulders. After ten circuits of massaging Lynette's back, Tom paused and looked up.

Amelia asked, "Lynette? You awake?"

Lynette giggled softly.

"Feels so, so good, right?" Amelia grinned.

Lynette stretched. "Aaahhh, that was so good."

Amelia whispered with Jeremy for a minute, and then Jeremy spoke. "Let's switch things around

a bit now. Let's go back to the kneeling meditation—but with a little change. You'll kneel like before, but your arms are different. We'll show you."

Jeremy sank to his knees, shins on the mat with his body erect while Amelia knelt before him. He rested his arms on her shoulders and she overlapped her arms on his, her forearms on his shoulders. Then they leaned forward so their heads were close.

"That's how we'll be," Jeremy said as they separated.

Amelia giggled, "But to do this part right, we'll need complete concentration, so I've got some blindfolds to wear." She picked them up. "Let's put them on."

Lynette stood up and took a blindfold and passed it to Tom. He slipped it on as he moved onto his knees but Amelia stopped Lynette before she took her place in front of Tom.

Amelia whispered, "Let me do this with him first, okay? I want to try something. Stay close behind him and be quiet. If you need to answer him, keep your head right next to mine."

Lynette nodded and Amelia moved in front of Tom and knelt. She nodded to Jeremy.

Jeremy spoke, "Okay, get close and put your arms on your partner's shoulders. Good. Like we did before, do your meditation breathing; do the 'Om' chanting like you learned in taekwondo, and listen to the other's breathing and concentrate on trying to sense your partner's energies. Make believe you're breathing for your partner."

After a minute, Jeremy moved to Lynette and leaned down to her. He whispered, "Can you carefully pull Tom's shorts down while I'm speaking? He looks like he's in the zone. I'll let you know when."

She looked at him wide-eyed but then she nodded.

"If he startles, Amelia will hug him and reassure him," Jeremy breathed in her ear. "Follow Amelia's lead but move very slowly."

She nodded again.

Jeremy returned to his place and continued softly, "Concentrate on breathing, in through the nose; out through the mouth. You're meditating and trying to feel your partner's energies and thoughts. Keep up your chanting and breathing and get lost in...."

He kept up the droning monologue and then nodded to Lynette. She reached forward and softly pulled Tom's waistband down, sliding his shorts very slowly over his hips. Amelia, not wearing a blindfold, nodded encouragingly and moved her head close to Tom's ear, exaggerating her breathing slightly as a distraction. Tom's penis was erect and throbbing and Lynette had to stretch the waist to get the shorts over it. Twice Tom's breathing changed and Lynette halted, then continued when his breathing resumed. Now his shorts were lying pooled at his knees, and Jeremy quickly moved behind Amelia and pulled down her bottoms.

Then Amelia pulled herself into Tom in an embrace and, mimicking Lynette's lower voice,

whispered in his ear, "Hold me close and open yourself to me..."

"Wha... what's going on? Lynette?..."

Jeremy continued, "Doin' fine, Tom... Try to lose yourself in the sensation of a warm body pressed against you and keep doing your chanting and meditation breathing with your partner..."

Amelia breathed in Tom's ear, still mimicking Lynette, "Ssshhh, just breathe with me, it's still me, sweetie, let yourself relax..."

She pressed herself into Tom and his erection slid against her tummy.

Tom's mind was so flooded with sensation that he couldn't process them all, but he sensed...

"Um, my shorts... where...?"

He started to pull back but Lynette put her head next to Amelia's and said softly in his ear, "You're right here with me, darling, you're safe with people who love you."

"But... but... Lynette? Who...? Who's holding me? Uuhhh... something's wrong," he muttered.

He pulled his arm away from Amelia and began to reach for his blindfold. Amelia took his arm, stopping him, and she nodded to Lynette.

Picking up the prompt, Lynette whispered again, "Nothing's wrong, darling. Just relax, breathe, chant, and try to feel my thoughts."

"But my shorts..."

"Sshhhh," she urged, "they don't matter... just relax."

Jeremy moved closer. "Tom, Amelia's gonna come real close to you now, okay?" and motioned Lynette to slide closer behind Tom and to put her hands around him while Amelia moved her head to speak in Tom's other ear.

While both girls stroked Tom's body, one in front and the other at his back, Amelia began speaking in a very soft voice.

"Denise told me about an awful thing that happened to her, Tom, when she was thirteen or fourteen. Her mom's boyfriend tried to rape her—he pushed her onto her bed and pulled her clothes off. After that happened, she was terrified about her body being exposed. About a year or two later, she panicked when they tried to strip her in school—just like you, right? You panic at the idea of nudity?"

Tom's mind was swirling with all kinds of sensations but he was able to choke out, "Uh, yeah..."

Amelia continued, "She told me about how a therapist helped her recall all about what happened and doing that helped her come to grips with her panic. So I thought of having us do something like that. I know you told us that you don't remember what caused your own panic about nudity, but I have a very strong feeling that *something* happened to cause it."

Tom started to speak but she shushed him, “Sshhh. Wait. Listen. Keep your meditation breathing going but let’s stop the chanting now.”

She went on, “I’ve felt a really dark blockage in your spirit, like your energies are bottled up in there. Remember, we talked about it when we got together that first time. But today, you seemed to sense Lynette and she could sense you, so I know that you *are* responding, even if it’s just a little bit. What we need to do now is to challenge you—stress you, and you gotta be strong, okay?—to push you to remember stuff. You can do this ‘cuz I know that you’re strong, aren’t you. No one’s forcing you to do this, you’re safe here; you won’t be hurt, and all of us love you. You okay so far?”

Tom grunted a reluctant assent.

Amelia took a deep breath and looked at Jeremy, who nodded encouragement. “Okay, first let’s get shot of the blindfold,” she whispered.

She slipped it off him and Tom looked at her and gasped. “It’s you I’ve been hugging! Fuck! You’re naked too!”

She nodded, smiling gently. “And see, nothing bad happened to you either, right?”

Tom started to shake and Lynette tightened her arms around him from behind. “It’s okay, darling, you’re doing great. Close your eyes and breathe deeply.”

“Lynette, scoot over a bit to your right,” Amelia said gently. “Tom, keep your eyes closed and sit back crosslegged—you know, sit like an Indian. Lynette, sit behind him, lean against his back, and hug him tight to your chest. Tom, Lynette won’t let anything bad happen, you know that, okay. Can you both begin your breathing together again? Try to sense each other’s thoughts again—be one with each other. Meanwhile, I’m gonna shift over a bit. Don’t be alarmed at what I do, Tom; keep your eyes closed.”

She let the two begin breathing and waited a couple of minutes, gently encouraging them. Then she swung herself out of her squat, moved her legs over Tom’s, and slid into his lap with her bottom sitting on Tom’s inner thighs.

He grunted in surprise as she moved onto him but she shushed him as she leaned in to embrace him.

“It’s okay, sweetie, we need to be close for this to work, I think. Tom, don’t forget to breathe with Lynette. Can you reach up to hug me? Let’s make a girl sandwich with a Tom filling.”

Lynette laughed then and Tom smiled faintly. Amelia could feel him trembling.

“Tom, you’re doin’ really great! Hug me and let’s all try to breathe together,” Amelia prompted.

Jeremy scooted over to the three and knelt down at Tom’s side, slipping an arm around Tom’s shoulder.

“I’m here for you too, Tom,” he whispered. “Remember your breathing and I’ll keep you safe

from the girls.”

Tom chuckled at that comment while the girls giggled. Amelia wiggled her hips in Tom's lap and her groin slid right into Tom's crotch, pressing against his firm erection and holding it up between their bellies.

Tom jerked and opened his eyes. “God, Amelia, no!” he huffed.

She pulled tighter to him. “Tom, you need this closeness so we can all share our energies. Can you feel all of our energies flowing now? They are and you're doing just brilliant. Let go, try to ignore it's me 'cuz Lynette's part of us too. Let your thoughts go like you did when we did that no-touch hugging. Close your eyes, relax, and let's all breathe together. Let's do the 'Om' chanting again, now, okay? And try to sense everyone's energies. They're flowing all around us now.”

For the next several minutes, they all chanted “Oommmm, oommmm,” and then Amelia, her chest pressed into Tom's, began speaking quietly in his ear.

“Tom, think back to when you were in that head teacher's office and he told you to strip.” Tom jerked slightly and caught his breath. “Ssshhh. Keep chanting 'Om,' Tom, you're safe right here now, you're not back in your past. Nobody can hurt you here; you know that you're safe. Let yourself, in the safety of our arms, think of what you were feeling, and know that you're safe with us.”

He shivered but kept breathing and resumed the chant.

“Good, Tom,” Amelia crooned. “Think back now; think about how your body felt when you knew you were in danger. Remember that this time you're completely safe, with people who love you. Your body knows it's safe now; we're holding you tight and we're all breathing along with you, sharing your breath. Nothing bad can happen now.”

Tom's muscles strained and he moaned.

“Breathe deeply, Tom,” Amelia sang softly. “Let your mind travel back to when you got panicked. You're in no danger, so your body should be relaxed as we caress it. See, feel this.”

Amelia ground her pelvis against Tom, pushing her mons into his erection. He groaned as his penis grew harder.

“I want to free your *kundalini shakti*, Tom,” Amelia explained softly; “remember, in your training we spoke about the body's *chakras*. Your channels are blocked and the *kundalini* energies are all bottled up; they're the strongest and we need to release them. Their root is in the pelvis. But try not to think of that. Think of how your body is telling you that it's totally safe so you can let your mind return to that time and nothing bad will happen. Try to keep breathing with us, while you tell me what you recall.”

Tom took several deep breaths and haltingly began. “I was in there... teachers were coming for me... there was like a darkness hovering over me... I remember a pressure... my chest ... a danger,

like I couldn't breathe..."

"You can breathe now, Tom; keep breathing with our chants. See, there's no danger now. Where was the darkness? Did you see it or feel it?"

Tom exhaled sharply, shivered, and took another deep breath and resumed the breathing. Lynette hugged him reassuringly.

"Ahhh, the darkness... it was in my mind... I could see fine, but it was like my breathing—oh yeah, I was afraid to breathe 'cause I knew that I'd drown—yeah, it was like that... I was drowning... when they were pulling off my jacket. The blackness... darkness... I was sinking and water was going over my head. Yeah, I had to keep my clothes! My clothes! That was *how I could stay alive!*"

These last words were almost a shout and Tom was sitting up, his muscles rigid.

Amelia hugged Tom tighter. "Sshhhh. Relax, deep breaths; you're safe here now. Look, you're naked and you're not drowning, right? See, we're all naked here, there's nobody else, and you're still safe."

Tom glanced around; *none* of them were wearing *any* clothes. His mind clenched in fear, but then he realized that there was no reaction from his body—no symptoms of anxiety, let alone panic. Then he was aware of his throbbing penis trapped firmly between his belly and the stunning young girl—someone not his lover—sitting naked in his lap.

*Shit*, he thought, as his body bucked and his penis throbbed, *what the fuck is going on?*

Amelia was trying to get his attention. She pulled his chin up to her face and kissed him on the lips. She now had his instant attention. He looked at her in shock.

"Good. You're back, sweetie. You just let go of a big chunk of your fear, that was fantastic; I felt a whole bunch of your energies move just then. Your cock is a great barometer," Amelia giggled. She went on softly, intent now. "Why do you think you felt like you were drowning? How do you know how that feels?"

"Uumm, I did almost drown, Amelia. I was little, maybe seven or eight, not any older. Some big boys threw me in a swimming pool. My dad told me that I went to the hospital; I had inhaled a lot of water."

"Oohh," Amelia gasped. "Awful... Was that the worst thing that ever happened to you that you can remember?"

"Damn straight. Deep water still scares me. I don't do swimming."

Amelia was thoughtful. "Tom, you cried out that keeping your clothes would keep you from drowning. What does that mean? How would it help?"

Tom shook his head. "Huh. Jeez, I don't know where that came from."

"You were remembering what you were feeling in that head teacher's office... Oh, my.... Oh my

*god*. Yes, this must be it,” Amelia mused wonderingly. Then to the others, “Guys, let’s all get back into the meditation mood again, can we? This part is gonna be tougher but I’m certain we’re almost done.”

They all settled back into position again; but this time Amelia had Lynette swap positions with her. Tom had no objection to *her* sitting with her vulva pressed right up against his penis, which had lost only a little of its stiffness. Lynette giggled as she wiggled her groin against him and Tom gave her a little smirk as he felt her squeeze his rigid organ between their bellies. Then they settled in, everyone holding each other closely again, and they resumed the group meditation chant. Amelia softly prompted them to resume their breathing.

After several minutes, she began whispering, “Tom, imagine you’re the little boy at that pool. What kind of day was it... a hot, sunny day? Was it crowded there? Who was with you? How were you dressed? Set the scene for me.”

“Umm, yeah, let’s see. It was hot and crowded. I had... um, board shorts on. I was with Danny and Josh and Josh’s mom—they were my school friends back then. Oh yeah, his mom had us keep our shirts on; it was real sunny and she didn’t think the sun lotion would be enough. Josh burned easy, I think I remember. A lot of kids were on the pool deck, running and messing around, and no one was watching, I think. I mean, the guards should keep kids from running...”

“That’s right, they should, Tom,” Amelia encouraged. “Let’s keep up the breathing, everyone. Help Tom; send him your energies. Tell me, do you remember what you and your friends were doing?”

“Well, not really—um, we didn’t go into the pool... oh yeah. I couldn’t swim—I never learned how—but the shallow end was real busy, so we were goin’ to the splash pool. Then... umm ... oh yeah ... on the way, we passed some older kids, three of them, maybe 12, yeah, they were 12, Dad told me afterwards. They were harassing a girl. She was a little younger than them.... Oh shit, I never remembered about this part happening with that girl before—I told the kids to quit bothering her or I’d tell the guards and they’d get kicked out of the pool.”

Lynette chuckled, “Always the white knight coming to the damsel’s rescue, even as a kid. That’s just one reason why I love ‘im.”

Amelia nodded. “Brilliant. You’re doing great, Tom. Don’t forget your breathing. That’s right, in and out... Can you remember how you felt when you told off those kids? Did they stop bothering the girl? Try to put your mind into your eight-year-old self.”

Tom resumed his recollection. After a minute, he said, “Umm... Shit, it’s real hard remembering that now, it’s a stretch. I think they stopped... oh yeah, right, what happened was they had the girl cornered against a fence. They stopped harassing her when they turned around to tell me to mind my business. That’s when she slipped away. She, um, I think she smiled at me as she ran away but then one of the guys pushed me down. They were much bigger and I remember being scared then.”

“Okay, good, keep searching your thoughts. You got scared but you were really brave to stand up

to bigger kids for a stranger like that. Those were the boys who threw you in the pool? Do you remember any of that?"

"No," Tom said sadly. "That's when my thoughts get all jumbled together."

"Okay," Amelia soothed him, "no problem; let's just sit here and be happy we're here together. I feel good vibes from you, Tom, way better than before. How about a bit more meditating; let's add some skin stimulation. I'll massage your back... hey, Lynette, wanna try something awesome?"

"Sure. You're the awesome one, Amelia. I can't believe how you're doing this..."

"Aw, I just had Denise as my wonderful teacher. She's totally unique. My real soul sister. Try this—spread a bunch of oil on your titties and while I massage Tom's back, massage his chest with yours."

"Wow, okay."

"I'm in a real girl sandwich now," Tom joked.

"Yeah, babe, you're the meat," Lynette smirked and the others chuckled.

"Hey Tom, you still got work to do," Amelia chided, smiling at him. "While we're making you into a cozy sandwich, try to lose yourself to your younger self. Don't try to think of memories, try to think of sensations. While we're giving you pleasure, see if you can imagine anger, fear, dread, apprehension, vulnerability, helplessness, and see if any of those emotions match something you can recall. That's tough to do but you have the strength for it now. I feel a new confidence in you; do you feel it too? See just how far you've come!"

Tom smiled and nodded. He actually had felt a sudden surge of confidence—and affection, no, love, wash over him, for Amelia, Jeremy too, for how they had taken him and Lynette into their confidence and friendship. And Lynette was so right; Amelia *was* a truly awesome person. He let his mind begin to drift into a meditative state and, ignoring—not quite—the double-sided erotic massage he was getting, he tried to sense the emotions which Amelia had suggested.

Helplessness, yes, that felt right. Vulnerability? Possible but uncertain. Anger, not so much, but fright, yes, the fear was strong... yes, it was so strong that he shivered when he tested that one in his mind. Gradually a hazy picture began to coalesce. A tendril of memory began to form; two of the boys were grabbing at him—he sensed an increasing fear—as in his mind he saw himself running to a guard station, passing the chairs where he had left his stuff. Damn, his friend's mom wasn't there. Cold hands were on him then—he sensed helplessness now.

What happened when they grabbed him? Were his friends were nearby? He couldn't recall. Suddenly: an overwhelming wave of both fear and helplessness crashed into his consciousness. It came in a huge rush. He felt the sensations completely envelop him; it was an overwhelming, overpowering emotion. The boys were too strong. He was totally helpless... vulnerable... They...

Suddenly Tom jerked and snapped out of his reverie.

“OH! They **STRIPPED** me!” he shouted.

Lynette sat back and grabbed his shoulders. “What? Who stripped you?” she exclaimed.

“Those kids—it’s starting to come to me,” Tom panted, tears running down his cheeks. “Shit, I was totally helpless, one kid was holding my arms over my head, another was pulling my shirt off. Another held my legs. They were laughing, something like ‘let’s strip the stupid kid and steal his clothes’; then one of them pulled off my shorts and I **was naked**. Yeah, I think I was thrashing around and we must have been close to the edge of the pool ‘cause the next thing I remember is the water closing over my head. **OH DAMN**, it’s like I felt in that school office, the water’s coming to drown me! Oh god, the water, everything’s turning all black—*can’t breathe... it HURTS!*”

Lynette pulled him into a hug as Tom began sobbing; Amelia hugged him from behind.

“Tom, listen, you’re safe now,” Amelia whispered in his ear as she held him tightly. “No one can hurt you like that here; you’re safe now. You got the demons out; now you know why being naked scares you so. Your body remembered how it felt but your mind didn’t know why. Your body reacted to the stimulus of seeing nudity by triggering a panic reaction. It’s a textbook example; we learned about that stuff in our psych class last term. Try to breathe deeply and let your body’s reaction to your new memories work itself out. Your body knows you’re safe now. Breathe deeply with us, okay?”

The girls kept holding Tom as his breathing slowed down until he was again breathing deeply.

Lynette whispered, “Just relax, darling, it’s all over now and it’s all good.” Her heart felt like it had swelled to fill the room.

Amelia whispered to Lynette urgently, “Lynette, we’ve got to make this time into a wonderful memory for both Tom’s mind *and* body now! Keep embracing him, but watch me and Jeremy.”

She rose and took Jeremy’s hand. “Quickly. *Yab-yum* posture just like they’re in,” she whispered to him.

Jeremy swiveled around, crossing his legs like Tom was sitting, and Amelia sat on his lap facing him, but she wrapped her legs around Jeremy’s hips and pressed the soles of her feet together.

“Lynette, look, snuggle close, with your feet like mine,” Amelia instructed. “Press your groin into Tom’s, put your foreheads together, and look into each other’s eyes as you breathe together. Let’s do that for a few minutes, we’ll meditate together and try to sense the other’s energies. Jeremy, you know what to do next when they’re ready.”

Tom and Lynette were sighing softly when Jeremy began speaking.

“Amelia’s really zoned out now, so let me tell you how to take this from a passive pose to an active one. Tom, hold onto Lynette’s arse cheeks, pull her in to press her clit against the underside of your cock. Use your thighs to gently slide her groin up and down, keeping your cock in contact with her. Breathe together and kiss each other too. The breathing together makes it

work better. Let's do this for a minute or two and then we'll do the next part."

Soon Lynette was squirming and gasping at the intense sensations. Amelia was too, and Jeremy resumed, "Intense, isn't it? There's more. Tom, you know how to tighten your pelvic muscles?"

Tom grunted assent.

"Good, so when we start, you'll do that, and keep pulling on those muscles as you inhale—take a deep long breath in and tighten them as much as you can. Also try to use your diaphragm to pull in and then hold for as long as you can. When you have to let go, you'll rotate your hips a few times and consciously be aware that as you exhale, you're letting your energy flow through your groin and into the rest of your body.

"And Lynette, what you'll do is the same as Tom, but you're pulling in on the muscles around your vagina. When Tom rotates his hips, press your groins together and swing your hips along with him. Okay, let's do that, but again, don't forget to do your breathing at the same time."

The two couples spent a couple of minutes rubbing their crotches together until Tom began to mumble, "Shit, gonna cum..."

Jeremy chuckled. "Okay, maybe that's a bit too much intensity. Let's just embrace and sit still like before, foreheads together and breathing. Cool down a bit. Then we'll do the next part."

Lynette gasped, "There's *more*? Fuck!"

Jeremy laughed. "No, not doing that here, I don't think. But yes, there's more. What we're doing is actually part of tantric sex."

"Oh, I heard something of that. Don't know much about it, though," Tom panted as he tried to tamp his lust down and get control over his body.

Amelia spoke, but weakly, "Damn. Tantra gets me so horny. Guys, if you want, we can arrange a session..." she giggled.

"Okay," Jeremy said, "Let's meditate for a couple of minutes now. Keep the pelvic pressure going too."

They were quiet, but after a half minute, Lynette began kissing Tom ardently and began rubbing herself on his penis again.

"Okay guys," Jeremy said, looking at them, "This'll probably be the finale, judging how stressed you two look. Lynette, lock your legs now and both of you lean back like Amelia and I are doing. Put your hands flat on the mat behind you. Tom, raise your arse slightly up off the mat. Okay, that looks good. Now keeping your groins interlocked together, use them as a pivot and swing your bodies side to side like this."

He and Amelia began swinging their hips from side to side; Tom and Lynette copied the motion as they stared into each other's eyes.

They could only keep the motion up for a little over a minute when Tom's penis suddenly

erupted; with a deep grunt, he sent a geyser of cum onto his and Lynette's bellies. A few seconds later, Lynette's face and chest turned a bright pink and she gasped, "Oh, fuck," and dropped onto her back. The mat under Tom's thighs was soaked; it looked like Lynette had actually squirted.

Jeremy and Amelia had also gotten their "happy ending," and Jeremy reached over to a stack of towels strategically placed next to their mat. He tossed several to the siblings.

Amelia grinned at them, her eyes heavy-lidded. "I know something happened over there."

"Shit, yeah, it sure did," Tom puffed.

"Come slide over here, stud," she told him, stretching out her arms.

Tom slid over to her and she embraced him as they sat on the mat, side by side.

"Breathe together with me now," she murmured, and they did, embracing together for several minutes.

Then Tom broke away. "Oh shit... that was so intense. I smelled lavender. Were you thinking...?"

Amelia clapped her hands in joy. "You did it, Tom! I could sense only a shadow of the blockage that I felt in you before, and you felt my energies too. Jeremy says he smells lavender when we're sharing our bodies."

Lynette smiled, "Amelia, you're a miracle worker, you know. How you knew what to do..."

Amelia blushed. "I'm so glad. It's a gift, I guess... I've always been empathic but Denise, Kevin too, helped me learn to use it. It's why I'm good at acting—I project my emotions to the audience and they get caught up in my character. I'm so happy I could help you and Tom. I sense both of you have that gift too, and maybe I can help you learn to use it as well."

"But what happened to me just then, Amelia? I never came so hard as I did then. I saw stars and fireworks!"

She laughed. "Yeah, when Kevin and Denise showed us the *yab-yum* pose, it happened to us too. Still does. Kevin told us that that posture energizes and brings out the body's *kundalini* energy. He told us that it's the body's strongest energy and just about the best way to bring it out is how we did it."

At that point the siblings realized that they were sitting there chatting while totally naked and both began to feel a little self-conscious. Lynette chuckled when she noticed Tom furtively glancing around, trying to locate his shorts.

Tom blushed. "Hey, a lifetime of modesty is hard to get over," he complained.

Amelia said, decisively, "But your need for modesty's over for you, Tom. You're free now."

## Chapter 19

Tom and Lynette were talking with their parents that Saturday night, discussing Tom's breakthrough, after they had returned from Amelia's house. They had briefly described how Amelia had been able to get Tom to recall his childhood trauma.

"I just can't believe how she knew just what to do," Lynette said with wonder in her voice. "And that session she did with us was incredible."

"Yeah, darling," Tom said, "but you know, I recall what you did with me—remember when you tricked me into getting naked with you?"

"Um, Tom, I wasn't trying to trick you. I had an idea about how to help you with that damn phobia. It worked, but only for me and you, though. But Amelia, well, I'm speechless."

Angela smiled at them. "She is certainly quite talented. No wonder she was honored by the Queen like she was. And Jeremy too; both of them seem to be amazing people. Tom, do you feel anything different about yourself now?"

Tom was thoughtful. "No, nothing feels different, except I'm kinda tired. Well, I guess I've got a... I don't know, satisfied?—sort of feeling. Like after I finished a big school assignment."

Duncan smiled at him. "You did finish a job—a major accomplishment. That was truly amazing. Say, just so you're aware. Sometimes, after a major psychological shakeup like you had, sometimes people have a bit of a reaction. The mind has to establish a new status quo, so you might have a bit of emotional reaction in the next day or so. If that happens, just know it's normal and let me or Mom know if it gets too intense for you."

"Sure, Dad, Mom. Love you both."

Lynette nodded. "I'll watch out for Tom, Dad. Thanks. Love you both too."

The two siblings hugged their parents and went to their bedroom. As they got ready for the night, Tom looked at Lynette.

"Darling, I just can't believe how Amelia knew how to get me to remember what happened to me—my past shrinks couldn't do it."

Lynette giggled. "Um, her techniques are a bit... unconventional, aren't they? Can't see a shrink doing that kind of stuff."

"I guess. Sure. But shit, she really knew how to get me to remember... Hey, she did say that she and Jeremy worked with Denise, Kevin too, and they're apparently some kind of psychological wizards too, right?"

Lynette nodded. "I really want to talk to Amelia about her feeling people's energies now. And speaking of energies, I'm also totally wiped out after that session."

Tom yawned. "Absolutely. Me too; I'm gonna crash any time now. Let's get ready for bed. What time do we need to get up?"

"It's Sunday. Mom and Dad're going shopping at 11. I'm going with them. If you want to go, should I roust you in time?" Lynette smiled.

"Oh, sure. If I'm not up, kick me out of bed by 9:30."

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On Sunday morning, Tom awoke with a raging hardon. He felt around and the bed was empty; then he heard Lynette in the hall talking with her mom. Sighing, he got out of bed, slipped on his robe, and padded to the bathroom. It took some cold water in the shower to relax him enough so that he could empty his bladder, but he decided not to relieve his sexual tensions. He wanted to see how he felt today, his first "normal" day after learning about the source of his panic attacks.

Nothing unusual happened during the day, except that Tom's parents were unusually solicitous about his mental state, to the point that he grouched at one point, "Hey guys, I'm not gonna have a meltdown over what happened, okay? I feel fine, like I usually do."

Lynette continued to watch Tom carefully, however, and noticed that he was acting like he was somewhat uncomfortable.

When they were alone for a few minutes, she whispered to him, "Darling, what's up? You look uneasy."

Tom grimaced. "Horny as a fuckin' billygoat, Lynn. This hasn't happened before. I keep getting flashbacks to the stuff Amelia did with us yesterday and it's driving me crazy."

"Oh, poor boy," Lynette giggled. "I'll need to help you when we get home, right?"

Tom squeezed her hand. "Deal."

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Later on, after returning home, Tom and Lynette excused themselves and went to their room. Lynette wrapped her brother in a hug.

"Still horny?" she whispered.

"Yeah," Tom answered. "Not like earlier, though. Shit, when I woke up it was like it would never go down."

"I noticed," Lynette giggled. "You pitched quite a tent there, stud. But it was too late to take care of you then. But now..."

Lynette unfastened Tom's pants and pushed them down, followed by his underpants. His penis stood jutting out from his groin, pulsing with his heartbeat. She knelt in front of him and brushed her hands sensuously over his thighs, placing small kisses on them, gradually getting closer to Tom's penis. He groaned and lifted Lynette under her arms and pulled her into an embrace. Then they quickly stripped each other's clothes off and fell onto the bed, moving into a 69 position.

Tom ran his hands up and down Lynette's belly and hips and leaned in to press his face into her

pubis. She sighed in delight when he began to kiss her there, and she spread her legs wider. Tom buried his face in Lynette's vulva, immersing himself in her wet and pungent warmth. He savored all of her delights as he kissed, sucked, nibbled, and licked her everywhere, taking his time to arouse her as much as possible.

Meanwhile, Lynette was making love to Tom's penis, licking and sucking it while stroking its most sensitive places. She moved a finger to Tom's anus and lightly began to stroke it, making him grunt from the tingling sensation.

Then Tom's oral ministrations reached Lynette's clitoris and she gasped.

"Ungh! Oh, good, so good, sweetie, do my clit, lick my clittie."

Tom captured her clitoris with his lips and worked it with his tongue, licking up, down, side to side, firmly, softly, teasingly, slowly, and quickly, moving over the little pearl and around it, while Lynette quivered, moaned, jerked, and squealed at the sensations he was producing. Her lubrication flowed copiously.

He was stimulating her so much that she could no longer focus on his penis, so she just held onto it and lapped it with her tongue every so often, between gasps. Then Tom slid a finger inside her vagina and pressed the fingertip against the front of her channel where he found her g-spot. He wiggled his fingertip on it while fondling her perineum and tickling her clitoris.

Lynette stiffened and gasped, then groaned. Tom sucked her clitoris into his lips and lashed it with his tongue and that did it. Lynette erupted with an intense shriek; her body convulsed; her hips bucked; her eyes rolled back, and then she stiffened with a long gasping sigh. Tom slowed his licking and fingering and drew out her orgasm as waves of pleasure rolled over her.

After a minute, she heaved a great sigh. "Damn, Tom, that was one of my best cums. Sorry I neglected you but..."

"Yeah, darling, it's okay. I just love giving you pleasure."

"But you're as hard as an iron spike," she objected. "Now I want that thing inside me."

Tom chuckled. "I thought *I* was the horny one all day."

"Shit, stud, after that cum you gave me, now I'm *also* horny! Get up here!"

"Who am I to argue?" Tom grinned as he crawled around to sink between Lynette's thighs.

Tom positioned his penis and using his hand to hold it, stroked it over her vulva, but Lynette would have nothing to do with his teasing. She reached down and grabbed his penis, pulling the organ into her crotch as she wrapped her legs around the back of Tom's thighs and pulled Tom into her. Lynette groaned, sighed, then tightened her vaginal muscles, trying to use them to drag Tom's penis into her.

Lynette felt very tight at first to Tom but she seemed to loosen up quickly as he began to thrust in and out of her. Lynette began twisting and tossing under him, clutching his butt with both hands

and gasping her encouragement whenever his pubis ground against her clitoris. Tom rose up and glanced at where they were joined; his penis was socketed in the steaming wet tunnel of his sister's body and he could feel his balls slapping against her butt as they mated. Lynette groaned in passion when Tom changed his rhythm and began pounding her with unrestrained need, thrusting into her vagina with strong hard strokes.

Tom was hammering into her quickly now; he wanted to come. Their mouths were locked together in passion, breathing into each other, panting, kissing. When Tom felt that he couldn't go any faster, he felt Lynette suddenly become as stiff as a board. Her head pulled back, her eyes flew open, and she sucked in a long, shuddering breath. Her eyes briefly focused on Tom's, then they glazed over as her orgasm exploded in her groin, filling her with an ecstasy that spread from her belly up to her chest, her head, and radiated out to her fingertips. Tom glanced down at his thrashing lover beneath him, felt her vagina pulse around him as her eyes bore into his, filled with lust and love, and his balls gave up the fight.

Tom felt the gigantic pressure which had been building in his groin all day coming to a peak. His balls felt like they were pulsing, they seemed to be swelling and tingling, and suddenly huge waves of intense burning pleasure engulfed his lower body. His muscles locked and his thrusting ceased with his penis embedded as far as he could get inside Lynette's body. Sheer ecstasy engulfed him as his penis spat rope after thick pearly rope of semen deep into Lynette. As Tom flooded her with his cum, Lynette slammed her hips back against his groin, her body anxious to squeeze from him every drop he could produce.

The two of them were gasping for breath as the aftershocks of their orgasms wracked their exhausted bodies. Tom was bathed in sweat and was unable to keep holding himself up over Lynette. He rolled aside and collapsed to the mattress beside her, fighting for every breath he could suck in. Lynette turned her head to look at him; she was soaked with her own sweat, her hair matted and damp, her face covered with a crimson flush, and her breasts heaved as she gulped for fresh air.

"Oh... my god... Tommie... that was... was incredible! I ... never came... that hard before!" she panted.

"Love you so much, sis," Tom sighed as they rolled together and embraced.

They were asleep within seconds.

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On Monday at school, Lynette ran into Amelia as they both had a message from the drama teacher to stop by to see her briefly about the play rehearsals. After meeting with the teacher, Amelia asked Lynette how Tom was doing.

"Fine, I guess," Lynette smiled. "He seems the same." She giggled. "But jeez, was he amorous when we finally got to be alone Sunday evening," she whispered.

Amelia smiled. "Mmmm. Jeremy and I, after you left Saturday, were... well... you know."

They both giggled and embraced.

Lynette pulled back from Amelia, still holding onto her, hands on her upper arms.

“That was an amazing breakthrough, Amelia. Tom hasn't had anything like that ever happen to him with all the shrinks he's seen... umm... ohh!—except when I... ahh... first got him naked with me that time...”

Amelia looked at her sharply. “Sweetie, if you can tell me what happened with him then... that's something that may be important for you both. Can you?”

Lynette nodded. “Umm, yeah, I guess.”

“Good. How about after rehearsal this afternoon?”

Lynette agreed, and they arranged to meet.

Later, after the rehearsal, Amelia took Lynette to her car.

“It never occurred to me that you'd have a car here,” she said as Amelia opened its doors.

“It really helps me getting to my job at the Foundation,” Amelia answered. “Let's stop at a little coffee shop I like to go to and talk; then I'll take you home. How's Tom?”

“Good. Some of the guys on the cross-country team are trying to start a cycling club or team. He's with them now.”

“Oh yeah. Jeremy mentioned that Simon's doing that with some other track team members.”

They soon arrived at a little coffee shop, ordered, and got a table in the corner.

Amelia looked at Lynette and smiled. “So. You said you helped Tom with his nudity?”

Lynette shrugged. “It's kinda complicated. Tom would get a bad reaction to just *seeing* naked people, remember we told you that? And you got him to remember what caused that to happen in the first place. So it's like... about a year ago that I had an idea 'cause Tom saw—oh, I need to back up. Remember we told you how Tom did all his classes by video from the school library?”

Amelia nodded.

“Well, he accidently saw a relief session. The camera got bumped and he could see it...”

Lynette went on to describe how she had the idea to blindfold Tom and to try to use his sexual arousal to overcome his panic, just like it had happened when he was watching the video scene in the library. When she finished, Amelia reached over and clasped Lynette's hands.

“Shit... that's quite a story,” she told Lynette. “But I have a question. You knew that Tom reacted violently when the teachers went to strip him. Weren't you concerned that he might panic when you did it?”

Lynette got a thoughtful look as she reflected on her memories.

“Um, you know?—I was so incredibly focused on Tom then. I knew how his body reacted when his panics were building and was kinda watching out for that... and... um... I think I was telling him in my mind that he was okay... *OH SHIT!* Wow, I think what I must have been doing was just like the stuff you were showing us last week, you know? The joint meditation?”

Amelia got a huge smile and clapped her hands. “Exactly! Lynette, I think you were projecting your qi, your aura, to Tom, and you must have been reading his own aura to guide you so you could go at a pace that wouldn’t alarm him. I just *knew* that you were empathetic in that way. And I think I can sense it in Tom too, but now that the flow for his qi’s been unblocked, maybe he can progress faster in his own empathic development.”

Lynette closed her eyes and leaned back. “Damn...” she breathed.

Amelia hopped around in her seat, she was so excited she couldn’t sit still. “Oh, god. I’m so excited now. Hey, maybe we can do something else like Jeremy and I did with Kevin and Denise. This is when we were developing the Avery Program. Oh, god, if you do this, it’s way better than the Avery stuff. Oh, this Saturday...”

“Ha, ha,” Lynette laughed. “Calm down, girlfriend. What is it you want to do, now?”

Amelia took a deep breath to marshal her thoughts. “Yeah. I had an idea. And it fits in with some news Jeremy and I got. We could get together with you and Julie and Roberta—all eight of us—and do a kind of post-graduate Avery Program exercise at my house next Saturday. It’ll be kinda erotic... well, we can see how it goes. I think that Tom’s horizons can be stretched a little more and I know the other two couples’ll be okay in helping. You think you can do it? And convince Tom?”

Lynette nodded. “Well, I know he likes and respects Simon. Roberta too. And we had fun last summer when we hung with them and Julie and Harry, so okay. Probably yes.”

“Okay then. So if I don’t hear otherwise by Wednesday, let’s plan on noon Saturday at my house. I’ll have lunch ready for everyone.”

Lynette frowned. “Um, Amelia? They’re already coming? Is this a setup?”

Amelia giggled. “Not really, sweetie. But you’re pretty perceptive, you know? Actually I had planned for a lunch with Julie ‘cuz the two of us’re doing a project. And I saw her just before rehearsal; she told me that she had just spoken with Roberta who said she had no real plans for Saturday afternoon and that Roberta was wondering if Julie and Harry wanted to get together with them. So I’m sure they’ll be able to come.”

They left the shop and Amelia drove Lynette home.

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When Tom got home, Lynette told him about her discussion with Amelia and finished with an order, delivered with a smile.

“So I told her that you’d agree to come. Now I won’t let you say no, sweetie. Just think of what

she did for you—for us—so I'm sure that whatever she has in mind will be great. Now you're gonna say yes. No isn't an option."

"God, Linnie... An advanced Avery Program, she called it? And stretch my horizons? Damn, I don't even know what my horizons are anymore, let alone stretching them. I really don't know..."

"But you're willing to try. I know you, darling. I think you trust Amelia—you do, right?"

He nodded.

"So, it's good then. Someone will pick us up around noon on Saturday."

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Tom spent a long week thinking about Saturday's session. When he found Simon and quizzed him about what was planned, he found out that Simon was as much in the dark as he was.

"Damn, Tom, Roberta sprung that one on me, too, and she says she doesn't know much about what Amelia has in mind. She told me to just go with the plan and that I'd enjoy the day."

So Tom was filled with trepidation as he entered Amelia's house on Saturday, trailing after Julie and Harry, who had chauffeured the siblings there, and looked around uncertainly.

Lynette grabbed his arm and whispered to him, "Relax! You're acting as nervous as a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs!"

Tom gave her a wan smile. "You know I don't do surprises well, sweetie," he whispered back.

Then Jeremy appeared from the stairs to the lower level.

"Hey. We're all here now, so c'mon down. Amelia's put out a light lunch."

They trooped down to the activity room, as Tom had termed it in his mind. There was a table filled with food and drinks and a number of couches arranged in a corner. Roberta and Simon were talking with Amelia when Tom entered with the others. Amelia told them to help themselves to some food and they'd talk while everyone was eating.

They chatted for a while as they ate; the discussion ranged over the upcoming play which Amelia and Lynette were in, about the new cycling club, plans for the summer holidays, Amelia's job in the Coris Foundation, and then finally Amelia brought up the topic of that afternoon's activity.

"So I had an idea about something that Jeremy and I did with Kevin and Denise," Amelia began. "Jeremy and I really liked it but we can't do it in the Avery Program—you'll see why when we get to it. I always wanted to do it again but it needs a group of really empathic people and until we met you guys, Jeremy and I weren't comfortable enough with anyone else to try this."

Amelia glanced at Tom and saw the doubt in his eyes.

She grinned at him. "Yeah, Tom, you too. You may not feel it yet, but you have a powerful aura and now that your body's been freed of its energy blockage, you can begin to learn to feel other people's auras too. You did that with me last time, remember?"

Tom nodded uncomfortably. Amelia got up and motioned Tom to follow her to a corner across the room.

She spoke very softly to him. "Remember, Tom, I know that you couldn't do the bonding part of the Avery Program and I understand why. Roberta's told me how she and Simon were also affected when they began it and that's something that I think we need to account for in the Program design. Anyway, today I wanted to try something involving you, Tom, and so that you aren't put on the spot when we begin, let me ask you how you felt about all of the touching we did last time, after you realized it was me holding you and not Lynette. And about your empathic abilities. Are those things you can discuss with our little group?"

"Um, yeah, I think..."

"And do you think you could do some of the Avery stuff now—the touching you couldn't do back in that class?"

Tom thought for a few moments, then responded, "Maybe. But could we stop if I need to?"

"Oh sure," Amelia grinned happily. "That's wonderful, Tom. Let's go back to the others now."

When they returned to the others, Amelia nodded imperceptively to Jeremy and sat down next to Tom on one of the sofas.

Jeremy broke off his chatting with Simon and raised his voice a little as he looked at the others. "Well then, mates," he began, "first, there's a lot of news to share now. And it affects us and the school too—and you blokes as well. We'll need your help for this. See, you know that next year Amelia and I are supposed to be in upper sixth form here. Now that's changed; we're going to the States for uni instead."

There were a number of exclamations of surprise at that comment.

"Yeah, that's right," Jeremy continued. "We kinda knew that Kevin was looking into uni options for us but we never realized how much he could do. In a nutshell, Mr Gerston, the U.S. president, his term will be over this coming January, and he's a big part of this. He's to be the head, probably more than just a figurehead, of a new international relations think tank, um, it's Columbia Institute of Economics, that's being set up and it's connected to Westphalia University in Maryland where his old friend and college roommate, Dr Vickers, is president. Vickers was the U.S. ambassador to Indonesia several years ago and he knows Kevin from when Kevin visited there. So here's what happened. Gerston and Vickers want Kevin to be part of that new institute and that's where he's gonna do his doctorate. Also Denise was given a full ride to go to med school at Westphalia. For Amelia, they've also offered her a full ride scholarship and in addition, under the umbrella of the new institute, she'll be involved in setting up a program for training cultural missions in third-world countries, just like she did here for the Coris Foundation, but on a much larger scale. And they offered me a full-ride uni scholarship together with a job in the new institute too; I'll be helping in the international law area with the idea that I'll be going on to law school. We have to leave here in August. So that's our news."

“Damn, Jeremy,” Harry exclaimed. “That’s one hell of an opportunity for you both!”

Everyone else was clamoring their congratulations.

Then Julie spoke up. “Erm, Jeremy, you mentioned that we had a part of your news too. Is it because you’re not going to be here next year and we have to step up somehow?”

Amelia grinned and nodded. “See, we knew you’d be perceptive and figure it out! Yeah, it appears that after Denise and Kevin left, Jeremy and I became the resident Avery kind-of-experts. It’s dumb that it happened, I think, ‘cuz we’re like still just teenagers! School-kids.”

Roberta interrupted. “But no one in the U.K. knows more than you about it, Amelia!”

Amelia waved her hand. “Whatever. Our part was the mentor role as you know. And thanks to Lynette and Tom’s experience, there’s a whole new dimension to be considered in the pairings we took for granted for the Avery bonding exercises. So it looks to Jeremy and me that the Avery Program still has some unfinished work.” She looked at Jeremy.

Jeremy nodded at her and continued her thought. “So that’s where you guys come in; you’re to be our new mentor leaders. You guys have the highest levels of empathy that I’ve ever seen—except of course, for Denise and Kevin. And Amelia.”

Tom was looking somewhat more anxious now. He broke in, “Um, Jeremy, how do you figure me and Lynette fit in? We...”

Amelia put her hand on Tom’s arm. “Wait, Tom, we’ll explain...”

Lynette interrupted then. “Jeremy, how can you think that I, or especially Tom, given his reaction to the Avery Program, have any skills like the rest of you guys?”

Tom nodded vehemently. “Yeah, really!”

Jeremy shrugged and looked at Amelia. “Darling, you’re better at explaining what we know about this than I am.”

He chuckled when she shrugged, then she responded, “Jeremy, first tell them what you’ve noticed about Tom. Then I’ll tell Lynette what I think about her hidden skills.”

Jeremy nodded. “Okay then. So Tom, you should know that people who do well in influencing other people and understanding them have... er, call it gifts... that show in many ways. For Amelia, the most noticeable sign of her ability to do this is when she’s on stage. We’ve all seen how she just captivates her audience. And when you talk to her and she listens, you get the sense that you’re the most important person in the world to her. That makes you feel good about talking to her, makes you drop any unconscious inhibitions, and opens yourself emotionally to her. Guess who else here is like that? Tom, for sure you are, for one.”

Tom reacted, “What? Me? How?”

Jeremy grinned. “Julie, tell Tom what you noticed about him, first from that summer course, and then how he was when you tried to work with him as a mentor.”

“Cor, that was so weird,” Julie began. “During the summer, we noticed how closely Tom, Lynette too, fit in with everyone and it almost felt to us at times like they had actually done the Avery Program with our group. They seemed like we had known them for, I dunno... ages... they just had all the right vibes.”

Simon broke in, “Erm, pardon my interrupting, Julie, but that hits it bloomin’ perfect! I constantly had to remind myself that he wasn’t in our Avery group in school; we all felt close to him and Lynette. Sorry, go on...”

“Sure. I recall that Tom had no problem with the physical contact in our group—you know, kind of like we all did, our intimacy after we did the Avery classes. He and Lynette didn’t stay around when our group did go into several more intense ... um, well, snogging sessions ... but he did lots of casual touching and even had some brief hugs too with lots of us in the group. I know that I did make a strong connection with him last summer. That’s what totally threw me when I tried to work with him as his Avery mentor. I was gobsmacked when he was in the Avery session I mentored. He was totally closed up; he was like a bloomin’ brick wall emotionally after he ran out of the classroom. In the summer he was all open and I could feel the warmth that flowed from him. But in that Avery session, it was like working with, well, it seemed like I couldn’t feel anything from him. It was like a blank, a total void. I didn’t know what to do, nothing prepared me for dealing with a total emotional blank, so I had to send him away. I’ve never been so uncomfortable with someone like that. Brrr. But now, he’s like the old Tom again.”

Tom looked embarrassed. “Sorry...” he began, but Amelia cut him off.

“I think I know what you felt, Julie,” she said. “Tom, I think what Julie’s describing shows how strongly you can project your emotions—your aura. I think your blanking her out like that was an involuntary defensive reaction and I’ll tell you more about what I think after you hear some more from our friends. Harry, you also told me and Jeremy about how you thought Tom fit in with your summer group. Tell him what you noticed.”

Harry looked at Tom. “Right. This bloke, who wasn’t a part of our Avery classes last year, just slid right into our group as if he had been part of us all along, like Julie and Simon said. At first he was a bit aloof, maybe, as if he felt, um, uncomfortable, but he’s got this presence about him, a kind of assurance, a confidence, and it must have overcome his discomfort, I guess. And all the others really liked talking with him; he was a good listener, a lot like Amelia. Like Julie said, he and Lynette always disappeared when we had our little group grope sessions but nobody thought anything bad of their not joining in. We all liked him—them—too much to think he or they were avoiding us. It really felt to all of us like Tom and Lynette were part of our close-knit group and that was really strange since they hadn’t done the Avery class with us. And I know that Simon saw things like that about Tom too since he spent time during school with him.”

“I did,” Simon agreed. “When Tom joined the cross-country team, everyone thought he was a great bloke, even if he never hit the lockers or showers with us. Our mates thought that was very odd, but they never teased him about it. I wondered about that, and then it twigged me that Tom was kind of ‘projecting’”—he made finger quotes—“the idea that not showering with the team

was completely normal. Oh yeah. I've also noticed that a lot of times when Tom walked into the lunchroom, quite a few people would turn to look at him and the conversations would die down just a bit; then they'd look at him and then go back to their chatting or whatever. Tom seems to radiate a kind of charisma or presence that people unconsciously notice."

Tom was shaking his head doubtfully. "I don't think so... I don't do that..."

Amelia reached over and put her hand on Tom's arm.

"You really don't see any of that, do you?" she asked. He shook his head. "We all do see that in you, Tom. Remember in 'The Mikado' when you had those ideas about doing those scenes and you got Dixon to agree? She's a tough cookie, she doesn't depart from the script, and it's really hard to get her to change her mind, yet you persuaded her, kinda easily, in fact. Now I'll mention some stuff from what I know about you from talking to Lynette. She told me about how you were pretty much an outsider in your past schools, and especially last year at your old school. You weren't a part of any cliques and had very few friends. You were always a loner. You know how the kids bully and tease loners and others who don't fit in? Were you ever bullied and teased in school?"

"Um... no, can't think that I ever was," Tom said slowly. "Except for some of the crap caused by that naked Program but that wasn't really bullying, I guess."

Amelia pressed on. "See, Tom? Loner kids like you were are almost always bullied or become social outcasts. You had become almost 'invisible' to anyone who normally would have targeted you as being 'different.' I think you projected a kind of psychic bubble around yourself and that kept any unwanted attention away. I think that's what Julie encountered when she tried to work with you as a mentor; you simply blanked her out. Another thing, you've acted as the white knight, coming to the aid of distressed people, according to a few stories from Lynette and even from your own comments. And I've personally seen you do that too. Do you know that such acts demonstrate a large measure of empathy?"

"Um... didn't know that," Tom said resignedly.

"Well, case closed, Tom," Amelia said smugly. "You're highly empathic and have the ability to project your 'aura' to others. I could feel how strong an aura you have when Jeremy and I worked with you several weeks ago. I'm sure you remember that session. Now, Lynette, let me pick on you."

Tom looked like he had been poleaxed while Lynette looked at Amelia, open-mouthed. "Amelia, I don't have any special..."

"Ha. Listen, girlfriend, you are *way* too modest. Didn't you see how the audience reacted to *you* when you were on stage in the plays we did? You brought life to your characters. You projected emotion and people pick up on that. Now let's go back into your past. Do you know that you and Tom act like an old married couple together? I can't tell you how many times you complete each other's thoughts. It's so bloody cute. You told me that you've been able to sense how Tom feels ever since you've known him; you were even able to make that breakthrough about his body

shyness. You couldn't have done that unless you shared a strong empathic link. And another thing. You know what I think about why Tom, and you too, had difficulty with that Avery bonding session? I think that you sensed his strong discomfort at doing what he considered to be an intimate act, which triggered your protective instincts, and he reacted to your projection of those feelings. You cycled each other's increasing discomfort until he couldn't deal with the feelings and had to run. This is something I want to explore, actually. Now, does any of that make sense?"

"Oh my god, Amelia, this is almost too much to think about," Lynette gasped. "I suppose ... well, maybe it can be true... but I feel so *normal*..."

Amelia laughed. "Darling, you *are* normal. Absolutely normal, wonderfully normal. Both of you are. But in addition, you both have a special skill; you use it with each other and give the rest of us only tantalizing glimpses of it. Jeremy and I hope that we can open your perception so you can sense its effect on others. Tom, remember how you connected with me last time we worked together?"

"Yeah, Amelia, but I still don't see how I could do what I think you want me to."

Amelia smiled. "What do you think that you'll have to do?"

"Well, be a mentor? How could I help a kid do something that I couldn't do myself?"

"Tom, the Avery Program is way bigger than our little school. We have the pilot program for it here, true, but the real teaching of the program leaders is happening at the teachers' programs in the universities. That is, it will when they get the curriculum completed. Jeremy and I were slated to help with that but now we won't be able to contribute. We want you six to brainstorm what the next generation of mentors will need to know, and that'll take your empathic skills—both latent and active, for you all. Tom, you have enormous potential, as does Lynette. Will you agree to at least try to work with us to see if you can do this?"

Tom stared at her, then shrugged. "Man, you're damn persuasive, Amelia. In my right mind, I'd never agree. I still don't get what you all see in me, you guys are way more impressive. But yeah, sure, I'll try. I owe you big time for what you've already done to help Linnie and me."

Amelia clapped her hands. "That's awesome, Tom! Thanks!"

She reached over and hugged him and Tom awkwardly returned her hug.

"Now Jeremy and I were thinking how to do this. We know how to coach people to be mentors; Denise really helped us to learn to do that. Now we need to figure out how to train people to learn how to train mentors. Denise said that empathy is an inborn skill that most people have. Some folks have it in great measure and all you guys are examples of people like that. With Harry and Julie, they stood right out immediately. Roberta and Simon were slower in developing theirs, but it's quite apparent now. And you, Tom and Lynette, yours was totally buried in your connection with each other, but now that Tom's aura blockage is gone, Lynette's own empathy was freed to open herself to others. So we have a core of who we think are strong empathes who

can move us along,” she concluded. “Jeremy, tell them what we discussed.”

“Okay, darling. Amelia and I were kind of thinking, brainstorming. You know how we—Amelia and I—got involved in the Avery Program business at school. I think we’re told you all, at some point, how our mentors, Denise and Kevin, used us as guinea pigs to work out some of the stuff we do, and how we were part of the first teacher group.”

Everyone nodded at this.

“So Amelia and I were thinking. What we did then was brilliant and we’ve been wanting to try to sorta copy what we did with Denise and Kevin, but haven’t had the right people who could pull off the kinds of exercises we did back then. Until now, we think, with you blokes.”

Now everyone looked at Jeremy with anticipation. Jeremy glanced at them and grinned faintly.

“I see you’re wondering what we’re gonna try. We think that to pull off what we’ll try doing needs a group of compatible people and the eight of us seems ideal. Everyone here seems to have a strong empathetic sense and the ability to relax your inhibitions a bit, and... Tom, you’re making a face?”

“Um, relax inhibitions? That’s where I had my problem, you’ll recall. I couldn’t...”

Amelia grabbed his arm. “Tom, you’ve changed. I felt it happen. Just keep an open mind and go with us.”

Tom nodded uncertainly. “Okay...”

Jeremy continued, “So the Avery Program is based first on bonding exercises which are intended to establish a kind of close link among the group members. It develops a connection, a trust, between the various partners, a regard for each other. In the very first training sessions with Denise, Kevin, and the first uni student teacher group, we discovered that we had to be very, very careful ‘cause if we let the contact get too intense, things moved very quickly to sexual and erotic activities. We actually created bondings which were highly emotional and romantic. Everything moved way too quickly and got out of control. Obviously we can’t let that happen in school, right?”

Everyone giggled. Jeremy and Amelia had been part of the first Avery teacher training group which had been taught by Kevin and Denise and some wild rumors about what had happened in those training sessions had been circulating....

Jeremy resumed talking. “Now we *think* we’ve got a more moderate path to get emotional bonding without getting too sexual. That’s the main advantage of having you blokes here to do this with us; you’re all committed couples with long histories of commitment to each other. Our object is to see if couples with strong emotional ties and strong empathic senses can use those abilities actively rather than passively. So far we know that Harry and Julie can; we’ll try to see if it can be brought out in you other blokes. So that’s what we’ll try. Amelia will start us out after we get ready. I hope you can go along with this—the Avery sessions use P.E. kits but for this we’ll need skimpier togs. Gals, how about wearing just your bra and panties; guys in your boxers

or briefs; is that okay?"

There was a great sigh of exhalation as everyone looked around at each other; then Roberta giggled.

"Hey, this don't show any more skin than a cozzie, does it. My bikini is way briefer than my undies."

Everyone slowly began to strip and Tom, after glancing at Lynette and getting a reassuring nod, dropped his jeans and reluctantly pulled his tee shirt off.

"Trainers and socks too," Amelia called.

Everyone shed them too and stood, nervously looking around.

Amelia continued. "Now everyone, we'll rearrange partners to do the first set of exercises we've planned. Remember, I advertised this as a post-graduate Avery Program, right?"

Everyone chuckled.

"We need a much more intimate connection than we do with the kids in the Avery Program to see how you can work together. As Denise told me and Jeremy, for this intensity to work, we need to connect on three levels: social, spiritual, and physical, and force some boundaries and inhibitions. Are we ready to try?"

There were murmurs of assent from most of the group; Lynette glanced at Tom. He had set his face in an expression of determination.

## Chapter 20

“Okay, here’s the first pairing. Me ‘n’ Jeremy won’t switch ‘cuz we won’t be with you when you take over the mentors. Simon will be with Lynette; Harry and Roberta; and Tom and Julie. Let’s move in front of your partner and look at each other; look into their eyes. Now put your hands up like you’re playing patty-cake, palms forward, and connect your hands to your partner’s. Press palms together and look into each other’s eyes and try to connect on a spiritual level.”

Tom followed Amelia’s instructions, testing his feelings to see if he sensed any anxiety.

*Wow, there isn’t any, really,* he mused silently.

He noticed, to his surprise, that Julie’s hands were almost as long as his, but her fingers were somewhat thinner; the tips of her long slim fingers almost reached to his own fingertips. As he stared into Julie’s eyes, he felt a surge of warmth flow through him.

*Where the hell did that come from?* he thought. As he looked into Julie’s eyes, he started to feel as if he was being drawn into them and was suddenly filled with awe for the feeling of affection which began to envelop him. *Is that from Julie?* he wondered. It was a stunning feeling, a different kind of love from what he felt with Lynette. But then he felt a pang of doubt about what he was doing. *Am I betraying Lynette somehow?*

Then his thoughts were interrupted by Amelia.

“Okay now, we’ll all close our eyes and then everyone, take the palm of your right hand and place it on the middle of your partner’s chest while you place your left palm just above his or her belly-button,” Amelia said in a hushed voice. “Try to continue making a connection with your partner now without using your eyes. Use the physical connection your bodies are making; try to project your energies to your partners through your hands.”

Tom hesitated. This was a way more intimate contact and his thoughts flew back to that other time with Julie, during that aborted Avery session.

*Hmmm, maybe this is why Amelia paired me with Julie,* he speculated.

The pressure of Julie’s hands on his bare skin shook him out of his reverie. With their touch, he felt a surge of something—not of sexual energy, he noticed, but still one of a connection, and it definitely felt like a connection to Julie. He moved his own right hand to Julie’s chest, over the bra’s fabric between her breasts, and could immediately feel the strong, rhythmic pulsing of her heartbeat. Then he became aware of the softness of the skin of her cleavage under her bra and he flushed in embarrassment, so he moved his hand up just a bit, away from her cleavage.

Meanwhile, under his left palm he felt the silky smoothness of her upper abdomen. It moved slightly as she breathed. His mind was whirling. He felt Julie’s aura, yes, but there was another presence somewhere in his sensations too, and it felt somehow strong, reassuring, and soothing.

“Feel your partner’s energies; project yours out,” Amelia intoned.

As Tom sunk into a meditative reverie, trying to follow Amelia’s directions, he became aware of

Julie's scent, so different from Lynette's. Again the feeling of warmth and... was it affection? ... love? ... intimate connection? flowed over him as he sensed Julie's soft touch on his skin, her lower hand rising and falling slightly as he slowly breathed, while the hand on his chest pressed firmly into his body, seeking for the rhythmic pulsing of his heart. Tom felt a closeness then, a desire to take his partner into an embrace, but felt restrained somehow. It seemed to him that that particular feeling was coming from outside him, it felt so familiar—and then he realized that it was Lynette he actually wanted to embrace, not Julie.

“Sense your partner's breathing,” Amelia whispered, “and breathe together.”

Julie moved in very close to Tom then, so that her body and his were almost touching; their bodies were only held apart by their hands and arms, which were crushed between their bodies. Now Tom could *feel* Julie's breathing as well as hear it and he matched his own breathing with hers. He felt lost in a sea of emotions and sensations—not only physical ones, but psychic and spiritual ones, and it seemed that he could almost sense other presences too in addition to Lynette's. Julie's was there, certainly; her aura was very powerful. There was a scent of lavender—*Wow, that's Amelia!* he realized. And powerfully flowing over him came a wave of sheer, absolute love and adoration which almost made his knees buckle. His penis instantly rose into a full erection as he suddenly recalled how he felt when he and Lynette were making love.

*Shit, that emotional wave must have come from her!* he thought.

She and Simon were standing right next to him and Julie.

Tom tried to refocus on Julie's breathing and again became lost in the sea of emotions swirling around him and gradually his erection ebbed.

“Now embrace your partner. Hold each other tightly, cheeks close as you can, while you keep breathing together. Try to connect your senses spiritually.”

Julie moved her arms around Tom and pulled herself close to him, while Tom dropped his arms to his side for a brief second in confusion. Julie was tall, about five feet-ten inches tall, and had snaked her arms around the back of Tom at his chest level; with a bit of a shudder, Tom wrapped his arms around Julie's shoulders. Their bodies pressed together and Tom got his breathing back into sync with Julie's. Tom felt the pressure of her bra-covered breasts and erect nipples against his chest but then became aware of the pressure of her belly against his partially erect penis and suddenly his entire consciousness became relocated to his groin. Slowly but inevitably, blood started to flow into his penis and it started pushing back against Julie's belly.

She rubbed against him there as she giggled and whispered, “This is a far cry from last time, Tom.”

He tried to pull his hips back. “Shit... so sorry...”

“No, it's good,” she responded and pulled herself back into him. “Let's keep connecting. You're doing just fantastic, this is brilliant, you're really getting into it.”

Tom renewed his embrace of Julie and began dropping all conscious thoughts to concentrate on

his meditative breathing as he tried feeling for her energies. Soon he was again drifting in a sea of psychic sensations and as he drifted, he again became aware of what seemed to be other presences in the room. The strongest was Lynette's overwhelming presence; he could feel the love flowing from her and somehow he could sense that the emotion was directed at him and not at Simon, her current partner. But he realized that he sensed Julie too, at a different level of both intensity and emotion. Her feeling toward him seemed to reflect a ... respect? ... admiration? Tom couldn't quite make out Julie's emotional connection to him, but he sensed that one was there.

All too soon, Amelia called for their attention.

"Okay, that looked like everyone enjoyed it. Right?"

There was a lot of giggling in response and then chuckling as Roberta lightly slapped Harry, saying, "Cut that out, pervert!"

"Now like the Avery sessions, we get to do a partner swap," Amelia announced.

Sighs from the group.

"Yeah. It's simple, your new partner is who you haven't been with yet. So Simon partners with Julie now; just like that. We'll start like the first time, with patty-cake hands," Amelia instructed.

She led them through the exercise again and Tom found that this time he felt much more at ease; any of his lingering anxiety had disappeared. He noticed, however, that he had more difficulty making a connection to Roberta than he had to Julie. He couldn't sense Roberta as strongly as he was able to do with Julie, yet he could still feel Lynette's presence very powerfully. At one point, an emotional surge hit him which pumped up his penis; his body responded with a powerful jolt of sensation like sparks behind his closed eyelids. It occurred during his embrace with Roberta and she felt it too because she mashed herself against the rod pressing against her belly and pulled her head back to look into Tom's eyes, as he stared back at her in dismay.

"Whoa, stud. Nice one," she smirked. "I like that. Don't worry, I felt Lynette's broadcast too," she whispered.

"Um, sorry..." Tom apologized as he blushed furiously, breaking contact with her.

Amelia was grinning broadly. "That was brill," she gushed, "did you all feel it? I think Denise may have a competitor. Lynette, you're a emotional broadcaster, almost as strong as Denise."

Lynette looked around in confusion. "What do you mean? What did I do?"

Amelia smiled at her. "I could sense you in the first round. You let go with a burst of energy. But this time, wow, that was pretty impressive. And I think I sensed an answering response from Tom too. It felt like his aura."

"But what was it...?" Lynette asked, confused.

"You projected a strong emotional pulse, girlfriend," Amelia told her. "Denise could do that, and her broadcasts could be so strong that she could make guys orgasm around her. Well, almost,"

she smirked. "Kevin told us that she did it to him once or twice. He came without her touching him. Happened to others too."

"Oh god..." Lynette said, burying her face in her hands. "I can't believe you said that."

Jeremy snorted. "The first time me 'n' Amelia—err... is it okay I tell them, darling?"

Amelia nodded, grinning.

"Yeah. Kevin 'n' Denise were trying out stuff that they thought could be used in a version of the Avery Program that they were gonna propose to the school but they got way carried away..."

Amelia sniggered, "Way, *WAY* carried away..."

"Yes, dear. They got carried away 'cause our innocent, demure *Amelia* persuaded them to show us some tantric massage stuff that Denise had mentioned they had done..."

"Jeremy!" Amelia pouted. "*That's* too much information!"

"Heh. Yeah, *you* were the reason they got so carried away with that first session we did, dear. Well, one thing led to another and soon me 'n' Amelia were shaggin' and Denise and Kevin were doin' it too. Amelia 'n' me had a real nice cum; it was our first, and then I got soft. I was bloody tuckered. That's when Kevin must've got Denise off big time, 'cause suddenly I got hit with such a blast of lust comin' off her that I suddenly got hard as a cricket bat and..."

Amelia snickered. "He he. Yeah, we did it again. It was even better the second time."

"So that's how I know how strong Denise was in projecting her lust. That wasn't the only time I felt her do that, too," Jeremy chuckled. "And that's how I know what she could do—and I felt something like it from Lynette just before." He looked at the others who were listening open-mouthed. "You blokes feel it too?"

Simon nodded. "Oh yeah. I partnered with her first. She was like a ball of energy. But damn, it seemed like her attention wasn't concentrated at me; it seemed more like it was a bubble around us. I wonder what it would have felt like if *I* were her target..."

Roberta punched his arm. "Dream on, you berk."

"I felt it too," Harry mused. "I wondered... suddenly I felt... erm, stimulated, but Roberta and I weren't doing anything at that point... that... would have... oh, I'd better stop," he said as he noticed Julie's expression.

"Damn," Lynette moaned, "now you'll think I'm a slut..."

Amelia grabbed her hands. "Oh, *NO*, no we won't! No, girlfriend, it looks like you're a lot more like Denise than I ever realized... empathically, anyway. I think you had it bottled up and kept it directed at Tom. As a protective device, like you were shielding him somehow. Yeah, as I recall, seems you two were never far apart for long. Anyway. Change of subject. Now we should try our little exercise with our regular partners and see what differences may happen. Then we'll discuss what we felt."

The group repeated the sequence of hands on bodies and meditation by couples and that's when Tom felt the full force of Lynette's aura directed right at him. As soon as her hand touched his abdomen, Tom grunted and his penis sprang up like a spike, and in response, Lynette gasped as his hand touched her belly. All around the room, people groaned and six pairs of eyes zeroed in on the siblings. Tom and Lynette had fallen into a tight embrace and just let their love for each other flow in waves over them.

"Oh bloody hell," Jeremy gasped as he broke his embrace with Amelia and the other couples released each other too. "They're *both* doin' it now."

"Yeah," Amelia agreed. "Almost like they're amplifying each other. Awesome."

Then Lynette noticed the others looking at Tom and her and she pulled back from him.

"What...?" she started, confused. "Why'd you all stop?"

"Ha," Harry snorted. "If you blokes had kept that up, I'd have to rip off Julie's undies and start shaggin' her right here. Wow, I never felt anything so intense..."

The others agreed.

"Well, I think we've found out that our friends are a psychic dynamo together," Amelia breathed. "I've only felt something that strong from Denise."

"Absolutely," Jeremy agreed. "It does seem like the two of them sort of melded together there."

"What do you mean?" Tom asked. "I think that I kind of got lost in sensations when I was touching Lynette."

"Yeah, and you must have let go of your mental inhibitions and that let your emotions just flow," Amelia told him. "Lynette responded to that and I guess you built up on each other. What's that called, darling, when a mike squawks?"

"Audio feedback," Jeremy answered. "A feedback loop."

Amelia nodded. "So looks like you two can project your feelings. Kevin told us how we can try to control that ability; using meditation, get in touch with your body and its energy flows. It's not easy to learn and I'm still workin' at it. I can get some success by focusing on a person or group and thinking an emotional picture at them. Say if I want them to feel happy, I'll imagine a litter of kittens playing and try to send that picture."

Julie spoke up. "I noticed that Tom is completely unlike when I tried to work with him as a mentor last fall. Tom, do you feel the difference between what happened then and now?"

Tom shrugged. "Well, I'm guessing you don't mean that girl I was first paired with..."

Julie shook her head no. "No, with me."

"Oh. Um, I don't know, maybe it's because I feel surrounded by all this positive energy and Lynette seems so... confident and supportive. That time with you felt... mmmm... don't know..."

artificial? Maybe manipulated, I guess. And Lynette was hovering so protectively. She seemed kinda hostile to the whole idea.”

Lynette interrupted. “Tom seemed so upset and uncomfortable and that made me concerned for him. I guess I’m guilty of being kinda overprotective ‘cause I hated it when he’d get those panic attacks.”

She had to stop to briefly tell the others about why Tom got the attacks.

“So now you know,” she concluded. “It explains a lot of things about why Tom did stuff the way he did. But it looks like he’s lots better now—we’ll see.”

Tom nodded. “Yeah, I am better, mostly. Anyway, last time with Julie, I had already figured that something about those exercises was wrong in some way—that is, it was wrong for *me* to do them. But somehow today there wasn’t anything threatening about doing what we did.”

“And Tom,” Lynette giggled. “You’re standing here only wearing your undershorts. And that’s not bothering you.”

Tom looked down and blushed. “Hey, you’re right. Damn, what’s wrong with me? Have I no modesty?”

Everyone cracked up laughing.

“Okay, seriously now,” Amelia said. “There’s so much to work out about what we have to do. Me ‘n’ Jeremy don’t think that Lynette and Tom should actually *be* mentors ‘cuz of Tom’s reaction to the exercises when he had that Avery class. And they both weren’t in the program, as well. But the mentor part of the curriculum still has problems—it’s really weak and it’s ‘cuz we still don’t know much about how lots of kids react to the touching and intimacy we throw at them. Like what happened to Tom and Lynette.”

Simon raised his hand. “Also me ‘n’ Roberta, at first...”

“Yeah. But you were able to get over the discomfort, how?” Amelia wondered. “Oh, right. You weren’t like Lynette and Tom ‘cuz they were so attuned to each other like we talked about before. Um, I said that I wanted to explore that idea some more. Anyway, Simon, do you remember having any, err, like a psychic connection to Roberta—you know, like Tom and Lynette? One where you could sense how she felt?”

Simon looked at Roberta, who shook her head. “We don’t think so,” he replied.

“That must be the reason, then. Damn, I can’t believe it!” Amelia said, annoyed. “This mentor rot, it needs psychologists working on it, not schoolkids! But the Powers-that-Be told me that they don’t have any psych people available. But they absolutely had plenty of psychs when they were setting up that Naked in School load of cobblers here—shrinks were falling all over each other to get a piece of the action then. But now? We’re supposed to go on trial-and-error or intuition, I suppose. It figures; there’s nothing career-building in doing a new curriculum.”

“You’re right,” Jeremy said. “Well, you blokes, think you’ll be up to the challenge? Tom, quit

scowling. I know you've got confidence to spare; I see it at the dojo every week. Just be yourself and your other skills will come through."

"So what it is that I—um, Lynette and I will need to do?" Tom asked.

"Brainstorm ideas, Tom," Amelia told him. "You others too. Now we know of one weak link in the mentor training, maybe there are others. Julie was really rattled when she ran into Tom and his emotional blocking, but I doubt we'll find many people as strong as him, since he had Lynette to ... ha ha ... 'power him up,' like a Pokemon."

Everyone groaned at that.

"Julie, Harry, can you think of any other mentor problem you had with new people, now that you've had about eight months' experience?" Jeremy asked.

Harry shook his head as Julie said, "Not really," and looked at Harry. "Sweetie, remember that one class? You told me about three or four kids didn't want to be near some of the others, right?"

"Yeah, but that was 'cause they were bullied in years six or seven and a couple of the kids they wanted to avoid were part of the group," Harry reminded her. "You weren't there when I took all six aside and got them to agree to give us a chance to get shot of those bad times. Being bullied leaves awful scars on kids but fortunately the kids in that group were willing to try to... not forgive the others, but to go along with the session and see what developed. We were lucky; I think if there was real bad blood there, it might have gone differently. So maybe we need to watch for that sorta rot too—experiences of bad bullying."

Jeremy nodded to Amelia. "That's an interesting one, right? Maybe there needs to be a screening questionnaire or something like it for incoming kids? I have a thought. You know those profile tests like we learned employers use for hiring? From our psych class?"

"But who would read them?" Julie objected. "Surely not the mentors and the teachers have lots of other stuff they need to do. The counselor maybe? She sets up the groups."

Lynette was glancing at Tom during the discussion; then she spoke. "Tom, you look like you've got an idea...?"

"Kinda," Tom replied, thoughtfully. "Maybe this is out of line, but being an outsider—hey, I'm new to the U.K., new to the school, and never did the Avery thing—but seems to me that you guys think that you're the ones responsible for making the thing work. Isn't it supposed to be a national thing? But it's like you're treating it like you're responsible for figuring out how to do stuff that people with doctor's degrees have trouble getting right. I know Amelia and Jeremy had a major role in getting the program started—but do you have to do everything? I know you want to see it succeed. But let the people who will be teaching it come up with the methods. That's what I think. Sorry, Amelia."

"No, that's okay, Tom," Amelia said. "You're right; we sorta feel we own the Avery Program. And we'll be leaving it behind. I just wanted to have it go in the right direction. That was a brilliant suggestion, actually. The faculty at the London School of Ed are doing the curriculum

but last I heard, the mentor part isn't being changed at all from how we are doing it here. We'll need to let them know about the problems you guys had, you know."

Tom nodded. "I think I have an idea then. My dad told me about how his bank uses the Internet for managers to discuss local problems and situations that aren't covered by bank procedures. What if the ed school faculty set up a web forum, only for Avery teachers, so they can share their experiences and problems? The curriculum planners could use it to pose questions about kids, like the touch-shy problem and ask for suggestions for dealing with stuff that may come up that no one thought about."

"Yes!" Amelia exclaimed. "That's brill. Of course that's the proper thing to do and that should force the professionals to make sure that they get advice from the psych people. But if we do that, I'll be kinda disappointed that you and Lynette won't get a chance to use your awesome empathic skills for the program. You're right, though. But while we kick that part upstairs to the ed school, won't you still work with the others here at Norwich till you graduate? You know that you'll be able to find kids with strong empathic feelings, and maybe even be a kind of student peer for any kids who the mentors think are having problems. Just to talk to them... I don't know how this would work exactly... you'd have to speak to the Avery teachers and see if you'd have some sort of role. They're always looking for kids with a strong empathic sense."

The group continued the discussion for another half hour and agreed that the next step would be contacting Dr Dorothy Connors from the London School of Education. She was the head of the team which was developing the curriculum to teach the Avery Program in the School of Ed and would have to be told about the need to be alert for problems similar to Tom's that the Avery mentors could face, the idea for starting a web forum, and developing methods for teaching mentors.

Soon the meeting began to wind down; the teens were getting tired, both physically and emotionally. With promises to keep thinking about how each of them could contribute, the couples were soon leaving Amelia's home.

When Tom and Lynette returned home, they were uncharacteristically quiet for several long minutes. Finally, Tom sighed.

"Damn. This crap is moving way too fast. No way do I want to be a trainer or have anyone think I'm some kind of expert!" he muttered.

Lynette looked at him with a half-smile. "You did have a good idea or two there, you know. That forum idea you had was perfect."

"Yeah, sweetie, and after that advanced Avery nonsense, it gave me another idea, a weird idea. See what you think." Tom explained it to her.

"Damn. Weird is right, but let's see if they'll go for it."

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On Monday, Tom found Jeremy.

“Lynette and I need to see you and Amelia as soon as you can. It’s about the Avery mentor problem and we think it’s important.”

Jeremy grinned. “Sure. I was gonna have dinner with her this evening. Can you come then?”

“It’s okay, you don’t mind?” Jeremy shook his head no. “Great. Where?”

“I’ll pick you guys up in my hired car.”

They both laughed.

That evening, Tom began explaining his idea during the meal.

“Okay, when you guys were looking for people to take over your Avery mentor training, you kinda recruited Lynette and me to help, but you know that we didn’t do the program...”

Amelia interrupted, “We were trying to find a way to use your empathy, Tom, but...”

“Wait,” Tom interjected, “listen to this idea. You did that ‘post-graduate’ stuff with us and doing that got me thinking. For Lynette and me to help you at all, we’ll need to know what that damn program actually does. Telling us won’t help. So how about letting us see it? We’ll need to be close to the action, though; not us watching through a window. Maybe we can pick up kids’ emotions or something like that? You made us sensitive to that, you know. Lynette and I can sorta feel other kids when we’re in school now. It’s a real strange sensation.”

Amelia was delighted. “Brilliant! Umm, let’s see. Yeah, I have an idea; I need to push it through old Hanford, though. Such a stickler for proper form. What do you guys want to try doing?”

After going through the various Avery class topics with the two of them, and how the mentors worked in them, Tom explained what he thought would work for him and Lynette.

Two days later, Jeremy tracked down Tom.

“Amelia got the permission. It wasn’t easy; she had to call in the big guns. Hanford wasn’t buying having you blokes in the Avery classes as sort of observers so she got Dr Connors from the Ed School to tell him to allow it. He was irked at her but gave in. So here’s what we’ve got set up for you. Since your regular classes are mostly just revising for the GCSEs and you blokes are tops in your class marks, you’ll be excused to go to a number of Avery sessions.”

He went on to tell Tom that he and Lynette would stay behind the mentor’s screen in the Avery room for a few bonding sessions, and that they would take on the mentors’ role in a couple of the team-building exercises. That job was simply one of safety for the kids, since there were four and the two teachers and two mentors would be “spotting” participants if they had to do anything involving climbing. For the role-playing sessions, they would be shadowing the regular mentors and acting as “crowd members” in sessions involving group dynamics.

With this permission given, Tom and Lynette spent some time working with the Avery groups during the following week. It gave them much food for thought, especially after he and Lynette decided to follow along with the bonding exercises behind the screen and do them together.

After they were finished with the few days of their Avery sessions, Amelia found Lynette.

“So girlfriend, what do you and Tom think now?” Amelia asked.

“Damn. Even with that limited exposure we had, it’s pretty intense. But Tom needs to process what he’s seen. He’s a really deep thinker and takes him time to sort out his thoughts, especially how he feels about emotional issues. But I’m getting the impression that he has some important things to say.”

“Good, ‘cuz we’re running out of time. I hope he lets us know in the next two weeks.”

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During the next two weeks, events involving Tom’s group of close friends began to move very quickly. First, Tom, with Jeremy’s assistance and encouragement, wrote up a quick proposal recommending that the Avery Program planners in the London School of Education arrange to use web forum technology to allow the Avery teachers to share their insights, problems experienced, and problems solved. This recommendation was immediately adopted and the Avery teachers were instructed to enter all of their past notes and reports into the forum as posts. And Amelia took Tom’s suggestion about taking the mentor training problem away from the pilot study at their school and asked that Dr Connors’ team at the university take responsibility for its continuing development. She suggested that Connors’ team canvas the Avery teachers in the schools to determine if they had experienced any problems similar to the one which Tom and Lynette had presented.

During their lunch period, Amelia found Lynette to give her some exciting news.

“Lynette! I just heard, Denise is coming! The DfE—the Department for Education—is bringing her here; they have questions about the Avery Program—all that mentor problem rot, the program objectives, and selecting participants,” Amelia exclaimed. “Connors contacted the DfE and asked for help so that’s how they got Denise to come. Kevin’s coming too; he’ll be dropping in on his foundation while he’s here. The anti-FGM program dealing with immigrants to the U.K. has been so successful that the Coris Foundation got a grant to set up a pilot study in Africa. He wants to be involved in its planning.”

Lynette hugged her. “That’s awesome! When will they be here—how long can they stay?”

“They arrive in a week, next Friday, and it’s for two weeks! You’ll all get to meet them! Jeremy and I are so excited that they’ll get to meet you and our gang of super-empaths. They’ll stay at my house and we’ll all get together Saturday. Denise goes to the Ed School on the following Monday.”

“Damn. Can’t wait to meet them,” Lynette grinned. “Hope they’re as cool as you say.”

“Just you wait, girlfriend. Just you wait.”

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Several days later, Amelia found Tom at school.

“Hey Tom, I heard from Denise. She wants us to try to find out from our U.K. Avery schools if any of the teachers had difficulties with kids who didn't like the bonding exercises. I told her that you had suggested your teacher forum idea and how it had gotten set up so quickly. She told me that was an ace idea; that's what her group had done in the States when they were trying to stop the NiS Program there. Anyway, I have the forum's web address and a login password for you. Can you—and Lynette if she wants to help—look for problems like that?”

“Sure, I guess we can do that. You mean any kind of problem where a kid can't do the Avery bonding stuff?”

“Yes, that's it,” Amelia said.

“Um... how many... posts, I guess... are there to search, anyway? You know?”

“A hundred or two, max, but a lot of them go into a bunch of other issues so you'll need to dig a bit.”

“That's okay, Amelia. How soon do you need the info?”

Amelia smiled at him. “Next week, okay?”

## Chapter 21

It was Saturday morning and the big day had come for meeting the couple whom Tom and Lynette had begun to think of as the Coris superstars. Once again they were able to hitch a ride to Amelia's house with Harry and Julie and arrived there, to be met by Elliot Hadad, Amelia's father.

"Hi there, Julie, Harry," he greeted them. "And that large guy there is Tom, isn't it?" He laughed. "I'm bad with names but how could I forget Tom and Lynette? Welcome. Amelia isn't home yet but she's on the way as we speak."

He began to show them into the house, but then Simon and Roberta arrived, so he greeted them too and then they all went inside.

"Amelia's not here just yet; she stayed over at Jeremy's last night; Denise and Kevin went straight to the U.S. embassy when they arrived yesterday and we all had dinner with them and the Porters—myself, my wife Janet, Amelia, and the Corises. Even the PM stopped in briefly to say hello. She was joking that she came to check to be sure that Denise wasn't planning some further nefarious acts on her government."

They all laughed as Janet walked up to them. "Honey, I don't think that the PM was just joking. Every time Denise—or anyone in our strange extended family—does something which involves *any* state function, Whitehall puts up the barricades and her whole government hunkers down and trembles."

Now everyone was roaring with laughter; they were familiar with Denise's record here.

"Oh, you're so right, my dear," Elliot choked as he wiped his eyes.

Janet grinned at him and turned to the others. "So welcome; good to see you all again. Amelia's so excited she can't stop quivering. Kevin and Denise, to her, are like the brother and sister she never had. She can't wait for you to meet them, too. And she and Jeremy will soon be off to uni with them in the States—such changes coming for her! Please, come to the sitting room; we've put out some snacks for all of you."

They walked to the sitting room, all chatting together, and about ten minutes later they heard a minor commotion at the front door as four people entered, trundling a bunch of luggage along with them. Everyone got up to go meet the newcomers.

"We're here," sang out Amelia as she ran up to her dad and hugged him. Then she gave Janet a hug and kiss and grabbed Lynette's, Roberta's, and Julie's hands and dragged them over to meet Kevin and Denise.

The others watched, bemused, as they wondered how, with only two hands, she managed to pull off the feat of dragging three people along with her, but there she went, the three laughing girls in tow, to meet the Corises. Kevin and Denise were vastly amused at Amelia's enthusiasm as she introduced her girlfriends to them. But she was talking so fast as she pushed one girl, then another, at them, that Kevin's head was whirling in an effort to follow her.

“Okay, Amelia, slow down!” he interjected into her excited monologue. “Give them a chance! Give *us* a chance! Let’s all sit down, calm down, and just get acquainted, okay?”

Amelia giggled, then blushed. “Oh my. I guess I got carried away, didn’t I?”

Denise chuckled. “I’ll say. That was no way for a *knighted Lady* of the realm to carry on. You’re supposed to be all stoic and dour, don’cha know.”

Laughter.

Then Elliot spoke. “Just leave the bags there, we’ll get them sorted later. C’mon, plenty of seats in the sitting room and we’ll get acquainted or re-acquainted as the instance demands.”

After everyone was settled, refreshments at hand, the introductions of Amelia’s and Jeremy’s friends were made. Amelia had already told the Corises a little about Lynette and Tom, especially about Tom and how he hadn’t been able to do the Avery Program. Tom had previously told her that she could share that story with them. After the introductions and polite chatter were completed, Janet and Elliot rose.

“We’ll let you guys take care of your business now,” Janet said, but Kevin got up to embrace her, Denise following.

“You might think that you’re just my honorary aunt,” he said, “but Amelia considers Denise and me to be her sister and brother. So that really makes you my mom, right?” he asked with a chuckle.

Janet looked at him and then hugged him back. “You always had a special place in my heart, Kevin. I’d be proud if you thought of me like that,” she said, her eyes tearing. “I get Denise with the package too, right?” She hugged Denise.

“Awww,” a few of the others in the room sighed and Amelia ran over to hug them all.

“Welcome to the family, Kevin and Denise too,” Amelia said to them.

Elliot and Janet left as Amelia, holding hands with Kevin and Denise, returned to her seat with them.

“Okay now,” Amelia began, “Kevin and Denise have already seen some government people; we were at the embassy yesterday and this morning. Even the PM came by...”

Harry interrupted, “Oi, your dad told us that she was looking to stop any more colonial rebellions.”

Laughter.

“Yeah, well, she told us that everyone in her cabinet was ready to help us if we needed something.”

Simon got his jab in then. “She was warning them to watch out for Denise, actually.”

More laughter.

Amelia pouted, “Grrr. You’re not gonna let me talk, are you? Okay, let Denise tell you what’s up with her visit.”

Denise grinned at her. “Still totally irrepressible, aren’t you, sweetheart?”

“Okay, about Kevin’s and my visit here. I don’t know how much Amelia told you all, and I don’t know how much of this I mentioned to her when I told her we were coming to London, but frankly, it doesn’t matter anyway. I’ll tell you what’s going on with your officials, but first, some background. When Kevin and I got back to the States, we got together with Cindy to discuss how we had adapted the Avery Program for the schools here in the U.K. She was surprised...”

Lynette interrupted, “Um, sorry?... Who’s Cindy?”

Denise shook her head and laughed. “Ugh. Guess I need to back up even further. Okay. There was a bunch of gals and guys, they were all students at Avery University and Georgia Polytech in Atlanta, who were involved in studies which put the final nails in the Naked in School’s coffin back in the States. Y’all hear about that?”

Everyone nodded agreement. “Good. So Cindy, that’s Cynthia Denison—now Doctor Denison, became the lead designer of the Avery Program. Its official name is actually the ‘Avery-Denison Program.’”

Denise looked at Lynette. “All good now?”

Lynette nodded.

Denise grinned at her and continued. “So Cindy was surprised when I told her that the version of the Avery Program which we helped set up here was designed as a formal class and would have mandatory student participation, just like the Naked in School Program had been made mandatory. She strongly felt that doing that was wrong; I asked her why. She told me that fewer than two dozen school districts in the States had adopted it so far. In the U.S. there had been so much extremely negative public opinion about the Naked in School Program that very few school districts wanted to adopt anything like it. Many states had even passed laws limiting any mandatory school social programs that resembled anything like the Naked in School Program, even remotely.

“Cindy told me that the way that the curriculum developers at Avery University were designing the program, it will be part of the P.E. classes. Actually that’s exactly how it was set up when we first conceived it. And it isn’t mandatory in any of the schools which have adopted it. She told me that in the long run, making it mandatory would be counter-productive and would eventually fail because there would always be a number of kids who are reluctant or refuse to participate. They aren’t touch-shy, I mean clinically, but they don’t like participating in public intimacy for whatever reason. Tom, Amelia told me about your experience with the program and I assure you that you’re definitely not alone. Just like you, in many cases these kids feel that even holding another person’s hand is a degree of intimacy that makes them uncomfortable.

“I explained to her about the adaptation we made here with the mentors to try to deal with the

cases of touch-shy students that we encountered and how our version of using the mentors had resulted in a virtual 100 percent acceptance. She laughed and told me that's exactly what she would have expected, since according to her, English people have this 'stiff upper lip' mind-set and appear to be mostly willing to do whatever the government tells them."

Laughter and nods of agreement.

"Back in the States, the mind-set is just the opposite; while the Avery Program has had a lot of great successes, the data from your first pilot classes here seem like Polyanna. Cindy and I have the theory that this is a local phenomenon. Everything around London is government-centric and people living here seem to be conditioned to be more suggestible. When Kevin and I were living here last year, we saw this first hand; the Naked in School Programs in London seemed to have more parental acceptance than it did in schools in suburban and rural areas. So when you begin introducing the Avery Program in rural schools, we suspect that you'll see many more cases which resemble Tom's reluctance. Then the mandatory program requirement becomes very difficult to manage, wouldn't it?"

There were nods of agreement around the room.

Denise went on, "I told Cindy why we had set up the Avery Program like a class—it was because we urgently needed to replace that naked program with something that had formal, measurable outcomes like proper educational programs require, or else it wouldn't get immediate support of the authorities here and we wouldn't get easy access to grant funds. She immediately saw that we were correct in taking that approach, but suggested that we try to move the U.K. version away from being mandatory. That'll be one of my objectives here."

"So Denise," Jeremy commented, "last night, you were telling us what you think the DfE expects you to do with the curriculum group at the university. Amelia and I spent several months last fall trying to get a psychologist to consult with the curriculum planners. They kept putting us off, blaming funding, personnel issues, no proof of need, that kinda rot. Tell the group what your plans are to break that logjam."

"Yes, logjam it is. The government brought me here because they think I can simply wave my hands and fix the structural problem they created in pushing this program into the curriculum in a way that it doesn't appear to fit. The Naked in School Program simply involved having kids be naked. That's all it did, besides all of the objectionable corollaries. The Avery Program involves scheduled class sessions; that's a major difference, even though both programs have basically the same objectives. That's what the Avery pilot program was for—to gather data to see if the program would meet the social objectives the government was aiming for. The program's structural problem is simple; there are just too many players involved.

"The government, that's the first player, has decided it wants to run a social program in the schools which has certain objectives, but hasn't provided the necessary resources to ensure proper implementation. The next player is the developer of that program, and in this case the developer is also the implementator—um, that's probably not a word but who cares. Implementor? That player is the university, whose faculty is involved in designing curricula and

training teachers. The third player is the user, that's the schools, where the curricula and teachers put the social program into practice. Each of these players has their own agenda, budget, resources, and capabilities. Guess what?—seldom do they align.”

Everyone in the room was listening to Denise raptly. They could see from her intensity how she had managed to accomplish so much, so quickly. She was continuing.

“What I think I'm supposed to do is to recommend how these three players are to be made to cooperate more effectively. But that's where the difficulty lies. The government part seems to me to be very amorphous. There's nowhere to push the ministry to get anything significant done; it's like pushing on a block of Jell-O. You push, it jiggles a bit but returns to where it was. The DfE is in charge of the U.K.'s primary and secondary public education system; they evaluate school performance and oversee institutions of higher learning in their education and training missions. That's from the blurb they sent me. The closest office that they seem to have which has a direct curriculum-setting function is the old Program Committee which had oversight of the Naked in School Program. Even that office was never staffed; it was composed of consultants drawn from other government offices, universities, and schools, but it's moribund now with only a chairperson remaining. All its former functions have been absorbed into other offices in the ministry. The only resource they have committed to provide is some undefined amount of funding; there was no promise of personnel, even if I could identify someone with appropriate qualifications.

“I could do the same analysis of the university and school players too but won't bore you with details. It seems that there are several limitations here; Amelia identified one. Writing curricula isn't a career building occupation. Another is that few psychologists appear to have much interest in consulting; the Avery program doesn't appear to be an interesting topic. At least it isn't in the States. Another is the bottleneck in training teachers.”

“So what are you going to do? What will you recommend?” asked Harry.

“Ha. Simply change everyone's mind-set about the Avery Program, Harry. We'll need to shift people's idea of the Avery Program from a skill-building experience, which it seems like it's become, to a cooperative activity experience. In a way, Kevin and I are to blame, but we were trying to shift the U.K. from one social program where nudity was the focus to another where building maturity, trust, and respect was the focus. We had to use the same format and structure of the Naked in School Program or else the whole idea of stopping it probably would have been rejected out of hand.”

Kevin broke into the discussion. “Hell, listen to her. Denise always complains that I get into lecture mode too much. Looks like I've had a bad influence on her.”

Laughter.

He went on, “I'm reminded about the beginnings of the Avery Program. It's a fascinating story. It goes back to Cindy—Denise told you about her—and her brother Roger and when they began college. They were taking an elective ed class and their randomly assigned project involved the

Naked in School Program, which at that point had been all but killed off by that time. So even though there no longer was an NiS Program to work with, the prof wouldn't budge in changing the assignment. Their project was supposed to involve designing class curricula for kids participating in the NiS Program, and then demonstrating how the curricula would work in those classes, but no such classes existed anymore. Their ed school had a stupid faculty committee rule which didn't allow the prof to make any changes to the approved projects; that's why they couldn't get a different project.

"So Cindy's group had to come up with a set of replacement demonstration classes which incorporated the principles of the defunct Naked in School Program, and her group was adamant that there would be no nudity in their classes. What's cool is that the demonstration classes that they developed were all based on their being part of the school's P.E. program, actually, and the unintentional shift to a more formal setting happened only because of how wildly successful and popular the program became among the first group of teachers and school officials. Everyone involved at its beginning wanted to formalize the Avery Program, despite its original design as part of a P.E. class. We need to bring the program back to its roots."

"So, Denise, can you work another miracle?" Amelia asked. "You want to collapse the whole Avery Program into being just a part of P.E. classes, right?"

"Exactly, Amelia," she answered. "But it won't be collapsing anything other than removing the exercises from its scheduled classes and moving them into a P.E. framework. But I assume that doing this will be more difficult than getting the Avery Program accepted to replace the NiS one. Now, I understand that you guys, mainly Amelia and her new friends—sorry, it's, um, Tom and Lynette, right?—they did some prep work already that can help me advance the argument to make that change; is that right?"

Tom blushed. "Yeah, I'm Tom Armstrong, and my sister's Lynette, Denise. We looked through some forum posts from Avery teachers."

Amelia interrupted. "It was Tom's idea to set up the forum, actually. And he and Lynette had the idea to audit some Avery sessions. I told you how they couldn't deal with the bonding exercise part..."

"Right, I remember," Denise said. "But you told me that the reason wasn't something you could share; it was personal."

Tom raised his hand. "We can tell you why. Lynette and I had already bonded for years before, while growing up, holding and caressing each other—just like the holding and caressing that we were told to do in those exercises. So we couldn't do it with other kids."

Tom went on to briefly describe his reaction to the bonding session and Julie's subsequent attempt to help.

When Tom's comments ended, Amelia interjected, "About a couple of months after they got out of their Avery class, and while working with Tom over something totally unrelated to the Avery problem, Jeremy and I discovered that these two blokes are empathic dynamos, Denise. You may

have met your match in Lynette, actually,” she giggled. “Tom is strong too, but projects his aura kinda differently from hers.”

The siblings looked at each other and blushed as Denise stood up with an excited exclamation.

“Lynette, come here please!” she commanded, holding out her arms. “Let’s hold hands.”

Lynette shyly stood, went to Denise, and Denise took her hands and held them for a minute while she gazed into Lynette’s eyes. Then Lynette gave a little shiver and turned slightly, reaching for Tom with one arm. He rose and took her hand as Lynette whispered for him to take Denise’s free hand. Then the three stood silently, looking at each other. After a minute, Denise took a step back and shook her head.

“Amazing,” she muttered. “Lynette is strong; I actually could feel her across the room when we came in before. But joined with Tom, her aura is overpowering. And Tom has a kind of charisma... unusually strong, by himself. Tom, Lynette—I’d really like to hear your impression of the Avery sessions you watched,” she told them.

Jeremy broke in, “First let them tell you what they found in the Avery teachers’ reports. It sounds like it might be useful for your consulting session next week.”

Denise went back to her seat while Tom sat and pulled out a paper. At Denise’s nod, he began to read it to the group.

“This is from that Avery forum. It really helped that the Avery teachers kept very good notes...”

“That was part of their training, Tom,” Amelia broke in. “Sorry, go on?”

“It was good that the teachers put their past class notes into the forum when it got set up. I guess they were told to do that too?” Amelia nodded. “Okay. There were reports from teachers at eight schools. Three had the Avery Program for a whole year and five for a half-year. The eight schools’ enrollment averaged 432 students and the size of each Avery class was 24. I calculated the total number of Avery sessions for all the schools together and that came to 87.

“Then Lynette and I read through the reports; there should have been 87 but some teachers put in more than one so there were 119 total. We only looked for reports of a kid not being able to do the bonding sessions and we found 19 like that. Based on 87 sessions, that’s over 20 percent—one out of five classes had a kid with a problem about participating!”

Everyone looked like they were eager to get a question in but Denise was fastest.

She didn’t look very surprised. “Hmm... that’s about what Cindy told me happened in the States too. What were the reasons the teachers gave?”

Tom looked at Lynette. “You can help out too, you know,” he said with a chuckle.

“Okay. I know you don’t like to be the center of attention, bro.” He gave Lynette a mock glare as she answered. “The reasons were all over the map, but what we found most interesting was how the teachers dealt with the kids who couldn’t or wouldn’t do the bonding exercises. Okay. The

reasons. Eight girls totally refused to do anything with a boy. The implied reason for five of them was that they considered themselves to be lesbians while three had experienced some kind of abuse in the past—sexual or another kind. Two boys refused touching girls but wouldn't admit any gay tendencies; they wouldn't do anything more intimate than casual handholding in a group, nothing closer.

“There were three kids where religion was involved. These were Muslims; two girls were seventeen and refused male contact, saying they were betrothed and one boy, who said he was taught that after he became age 16, it wasn't proper to touch girls. The remaining six gave no particular reason other than saying that they didn't think it was proper to do in public what they called an intimate act. But it appears, from teachers' comments, that two of these kids were in committed relationships with a classmate, so Tom and I assumed those two were similar to our situation.”

Amelia jumped in, “You mentioned the teachers doing something when a kid wouldn't participate?”

“Oh yeah,” Lynette answered. “In several cases, a teacher let a kid who stayed in the room during the bonding part but who refused to fully participate—it seems they stayed, went through the motions, but didn't do much of the close physical contact—these kids, there were nine of them—were allowed to do most of the rest of the Avery Program. It appears they were okay with doing the rest of the Avery exercises but that's just a guess because there was nothing written about them other than their mention in the bonding parts. That wouldn't have been allowed in our school with Hanford as head, that's for sure!” she finished to chuckles from her schoolmates.

Denise smiled. “That's really excellent work, guys, and it helps a lot. So what did you learn from your sitting in on those Avery sessions?”

Tom looked unhappy. “Um, Denise? I'm still trying to sort out what I think. The sessions made me real uncomfortable—that is, mainly the bonding part. You know, Lynette and I followed along with the group as we did the exercises behind the room's screen. I was picking up kids' emotions, okay, and some of the kids seemed like they were in real distress. But despite that, everyone in the group cooperated because the teachers didn't ask anyone to move closer or to show more enthusiasm. It must be that Brit thing, you said it before, that ‘keep a stiff upper lip,’ crap. Lynette told me she could feel the distress too, so it wasn't just me feeling it.” Lynette was nodding in agreement. “I asked Julie if she ever felt those emotions while she and Harry were doing their mentor jobs and...”

Julie interrupted. “Cor... I asked Harry about that too; we were so focused on watching everything. Keyed up, like, so we weren't relaxed enough to pick up any undercurrents. But after Tom mentioned this to me, I could recall seeing a number of kids who looked like they wanted to be anywhere else but there during much of the first bonding class. Most of them eased up after a while in the later sessions, but some just didn't look happy, even after their class was finished.”

Tom nodded. “Thanks, Julie. So Denise, I think Lynette and I can sort out our thoughts on what we think, if you give us a few more days. We're reading the rest of those Avery reports now and

that's helping us in organizing some kind of response for you."

Denise nodded. "Okay, thanks, Tom and Lynette. That analysis you did on the kids who didn't do the bonding exercises really helps. Now we'll need everyone else to pitch in. For the next part, we'll need a fair bit of help."

There was a clamoring of voices at Denise's comment. Most were questions asking about the kind of help needed.

"Wow, what a response," Denise smiled. "Looks like we'll get lots of help here. I have reams of reports to review—they're digital, not paper, so 'reams' isn't right—digital reports, about two gigs' worth. The reports come from Avery teachers in the States and these files were to be used for curriculum development there. But with the limited adoption of the Avery Program as a discrete course, the Ed School developing the Avery Program decided not to do any further work and these reports have become orphaned now. There's no one who wants to analyze them. When I got the call from the Brit government and learned what the DfE wanted, I checked with the Avery College of Education. They sent me these files and told me that nothing had been done with them other than some use by a few students working on various small projects."

"What kinds of reports are these?" Julie asked.

"They're mostly class notes from teachers," Denise answered. "Comments on how their Avery sessions went; these reports were requested for all Avery teachers to be sent back to the university. That's where I found the details of some touch-shy student problems in the States when I was skimming through the files. That's when I noticed a few records that discussed how some touch-shy students couldn't participate in the program; I mentioned seeing some cases like that to you guys earlier. So if I found a few cases so easily, I assume there must be a larger number to be found in all those files. I'll need your help in combing through them to find similar cases, especially those which would affect making the Avery Program mandatory."

Everyone agreed to help so the files were parceled out.

Denise continued, "Too bad we don't have a lot of time to do this properly. This project reminds me of how the group of students in Atlanta totally demolished the NiS Program; two committees analyzed thousands of forum posts and came up with data that nailed the coffin lid shut. But those groups included some computer science students and they helped doing the searching electronically—even then it took two months to collect and sort the data. We don't have that kind of time, but then, we're looking for one particular kind of problem. Now, I'll need to have something by Wednesday afternoon. Monday to Wednesday I'll be meeting with the university group and Thursday with the DfE honchos."

The meeting broke up a short time after, and Denise and Kevin spent several hours just chatting about everyone's future plans with Lynette, Amelia, Tom, and Jeremy. The others needed to leave because of earlier commitments.

During the beginning of the following week, Amelia's group worked on the files which Denise had provided to them while Denise herself met with the Avery Program working group at the

London School of Education. On Wednesday afternoon, Amelia contacted her group and asked that everyone who could stay after school to meet her in the Avery classroom. The only person who couldn't be there was Roberta. Soon after the group had gathered, Denise rushed in.

"Whew... sorry I'm late. The last meeting went a little long. You know who showed up, Amelia?"

Amelia shook her head. "No idea. Must be important, though. But I reckon it wasn't the PM."

Everyone chuckled.

Denise smiled at her. "Good one, sis. You earned a point. No, it was our old friend, Marg Seetis, the psychologist from the old National Program Committee. Oh, Tom, you know her? I saw a flash of recognition from you—Lynette too."

"Never met her, Denise," Tom answered, "but my folks told Lynette and me that Hanford had her come to the school to discuss me after I pulled out of the Avery session. She wanted my folks to send me to a shrink to cure me." He emphasized "cure" with a grimace.

Denise nodded. "Sounds like her. She's really conservative. Anyway, we were discussing the problems with the mentors—problems with their selection, role, and training. When we first designed the program, it appears that we had gifted kids to use as mentors. I say 'gifted' with all modesty because Kevin and I were the mentor models, but all of the early mentors, like Amelia and Jeremy—even you, Julie and Harry—have been strong empaths. And who got to pick the early mentors? Why, none other than people like these same strong empaths.

"So with Seetis present, we were discussing mentors and first discussed their primary role; that is, they're supposed to help kids who are reluctant to engage in the bonding exercises because they presumably are touch-shy to some degree. Well, we're learning that might be an incomplete assumption. I described how Kevin and I, and later, Amelia, worked with reluctant kids. It turns out that according to Seetis, we were practicing psychology." She giggled. "She said what we were doing bordered on an application of CBT, cognitive behavioral therapy. It seems that simply calming a nervous kid, someone who might be shy or uncertain about touching or hugging another kid—getting them over the initial nervousness—that's just peer encouragement, but if we help someone who actually has a mild social phobia or a cultural reluctance, the way you helped that Muslim girl, Amelia, that gets close to the techniques used in CBT. So that part of a mentors' role, she suggested, wasn't something that a schoolkid should be doing. They wouldn't know when they might do something that could cause a greater problem for the reluctant kid."

Julie almost jumped out of her chair. "Oi! That's exactly right! That's just how I felt with Tom when I tried to sort him after he ran out of my session."

Denise looked at her. "Right. That can be a real problem. Anyway, we discussed the mentor role for a bit more, then went on to their training. The consensus was that nobody had any idea of how to train a schoolkid to do much more than be a kind of cheerleader to try to get reluctant kids to do the exercises. Here in the pilot school, we had empathic kids, those who either Amelia or I had identified. And having empathic people working with reluctant kids gave us a greater

sense of success than we should have had. This led us to a discussion of the problem of how possible mentors should be selected.

“You all know the care we took in looking for candidates at your school. In addition to Amelia and Jeremy, the first group of mentors here were carefully chosen and were trained by Amelia—as you guys were too, excepting Tom and Lynette, of course. But are you aware of what goes on at the other schools? The other eight schools that have the program now?”

Murmurs of “No...” came from the group.

Denise continued, “Don’t get angry, but those schools decided the best kids would be the same ones who stood out in ways other than being sensitive to others. They tended to choose the prefects, student government leaders, or even popular sports players.”

The others were shocked at this news.

She went on, “Well, it works if you want the mentors to be simply cheerleaders to try to jolly anxious kids into doing the bonding. But in many cases, seeing that other kids tend to enjoy the sessions, overcomes some reluctance—a kind of peer pressure. That doesn’t work for more hard-core resistance, though. No wonder that Tom and Lynette found that one in five classes had a kid who didn’t fully participate. And Seetis backed me when I told the educational experts that allowing that kind of mentoring could cause problems if a mentor decided to be overly aggressive in trying to persuade reluctant kids. Fortunately this hasn’t happened, but after all, right now there are only eight schools involved, and these are being taught and supervised by the first generation of teachers, who learned in our pilot school here. If the program gets rolled out further, we all know that everything gets a bit more sloppy in each cycle.”

When it appeared that Denise had finished her lecture, Jeremy asked, “So how did you blokes leave it? What’s the curriculum group gonna do now?”

Denise sighed. “The head honchos from DfE are coming tomorrow afternoon. Seetis says she’ll try to come then. What I hope we can do is, at the least, try to keep them from making the program mandatory. Then suggest making it a part of the P.E. course. I still think that it’s incredibly useful...”

The others in the room, except Tom and Lynette, nodded fiercely.

“...but it’s best for showing kids how to work with cooperation and trust. I don’t think we want to have each class necessarily want to get into a massive group marriage.”

Everyone laughed at that joke.

Denise looked at Amelia. “So Amelia, sis, what kind of data do you have?”

Amelia pointed to Jeremy. “I’ve been busy with Kevin at the Foundation. You know that. Jeremy collected the data and Tom helped with it. You know, he’s a real maths nerd.”

Jeremy chuckled. “Yep, we used Tom’s method to compile the info from everyone. So there were eighteen schools, all in Georgia and we found that their average student number was 979

per school. They have big schools there. Like ours, the Avery classes are set at 24 kids. Fourteen schools have been running the program for two years and four have been doing it for three years. As best as we can figure, the number of Avery sessions that the files you brought cover between 398 and 401, so we chose 400 as a nice round number. When we collected everyone's list of narrative reports, we found 68 cases of someone not participating for one reason or another. That's about 15 percent or roughly one in six—pretty close to what Tom and Lynette found from the schools here in the U.K.

“And what are the reasons, Jeremy?” Harry asked.

“A lot the same as Tom told us, Harry,” he replied. “Here's the laundry list: strong same-sex preferences, a few that the teachers wrote were some kind of post assault trauma—PTSD, I suppose, or something like it; what the teacher called OCD—these kids didn't like touching and had other compulsive behaviors; some kids had known Asperger syndrome or another milder autism spectrum disorder as documented in their records; and there was a general category of public intimacy or reluctance to participate because of having a serious love interest. No one mentioned a religious reason, though. Like the Brit teachers, many of the teachers let a lot of the kids who didn't fully take part in the bonding do the other parts and didn't report any adverse results. The post-class summary and three-month followups were almost always positive. Oh, none of the Avery programs were mandatory and the mentors were mainly teacher's assistants and demonstrators.”

“Jeremy, could you tell if these sessions were in a separate dedicated class?” Denise asked.

“Erm, every time the class structure was mentioned, it was as part of the P.E. program.”

At this point, Tom raised his hand and Denise smiled at him and nodded to speak as she said, “Are you ready to tell us your Avery Program impressions, as an educated outsider?”

Tom chuckled ruefully. “Yeah, I guess so. Let me say that Lynnie and I talked about those sessions till we got tired of hearing each other talk about them. She agrees with my impressions too. To cut short your wondering what I think about the program structure, let me first tell you my conclusion. You guys really need to rearrange how you do the sessions...”

There was a great stir at that comment and Denise put her hand up to settle everyone. “How do you mean, Tom? That's quite a change from how we visualized the sessions would work.”

“We know. But we strongly believe that the team-building exercises have to go first, then do the role-play parts. But you should only mix the bonding exercises in as just a small part of the role-playing to help the kids who want to do it, to show them how to build trust, but you have to allow them to choose their own partners for that.”

“Wow,” Amelia said before anyone else could speak, “that's a really big change, Tom.”

“We know, Amelia, and don't think we're not reluctant to mess with your program. Denise's program. But my sense is to put the most important piece of the program first, as I've come to understand what the Avery Program is supposed to do. Let me explain the reasoning behind our

conclusion. What Linnie and I've noticed is that the current Avery classes produced groups which are emotionally tied and very close. The group cooperation seems to be based mainly on those ties. But I don't think that's what you want. The change we're pushing for should allow the kids to first learn how to cooperate to form cohesive teams and work with each other; that will help them to work with others who they may not have a close attachment to."

Denise was shaking her head. "Damn, we couldn't see the forest for the trees. Tom, that's a brilliant suggestion. Did you get the idea from following along with those Avery sessions?"

"Um, well, a little. I could feel real distress from some kids when they were thrown into the bonding straightaway, just like how I felt. But when the followup bonding exercises were done, after some of the problem-solving, there wasn't as much distress. So I thought about what Amelia was complaining about, back when I was telling her how I couldn't do the program—she went on and on about how the Avery sessions aren't supposed to be about building individual skills, it was about building group dynamics and learning about cooperation in a group."

Amelia was jumping up and down now, she was so excited. "Tom, I love you!" she shouted, then ran over to him and planted a big kiss on his lips.

Tom looked shell-shocked. Then he shook his head and went on, while Amelia stood next to his chair, holding his shoulder. Lynette looked on, vastly amused.

"Yeah, so this is what I finally decided," Tom continued. "The emphasis of the Avery Program is supposed to be on learning about teamwork and cooperation, everyone works together to achieve a goal. Not only with the little group you bond with. With anyone—any random group you get put into. The Avery Program should be set up to reinforce the emotional reward and satisfaction that happens when you succeed at a challenge. It should work by taking kids who have no particular connection and show them how they can act as a team, just like the military does. Then you should use the role-playing sessions to explore physical and emotional boundaries and do the bonding exercises as part of that exploration of limits, but allow the kids to choose their own partners if they want. The partners can be same sex, opposite sex, groups of kids, whatever. Let them explore. But do the bonding as part of the role-playing, not as a separate exercise in itself. You don't want to push people together in an emotional way; that's not your focus, but doing it first makes it the focus. Don't make the Avery Program about pushing the kids together; let the bonding or whatever happens, happen organically as part of the kids forging a team."

Denise was looking at Tom in awe, an expression mirrored by everyone else. Amelia bent down to kiss Tom again.

"Tom, that's such an incredible insight," Denise exclaimed. "It feels right to me, too, and I think it solves all of the problems about mentors, a separate course, the whole damned package. It also resolves the issue of being part of the P.E. classes and the mandatory program problem too. The kids really love the problem-solving exercises, the role-playing too, so if they choose to do some personal bonding, that would be their choice. Shit, I just love it. I won't have any problem pitching your recommendation."

"Lynette's too," Tom insisted.

Lynette snorted. "Sure. I just helped you organize your thoughts. This idea was maybe 95 percent yours, stud," she giggled.

After the group settled down from their excitement over Tom's reorganization idea, Denise worked with them to plan her presentation to the officials on Thursday. She apologized to Tom and Lynette for not offering to have them come with her, it wouldn't be appropriate in the context of that kind of meeting, but she promised to give them credit for the idea. Tom demurred, telling her that they weren't after any recognition. As usual, Tom's modesty was still alive and well.

### **Epilog**

Of course Denise's presentation of Tom's Avery Program modifications was highly successful and the changes to the program were approved. Marjory Seetis had attended and she gave the recommended changes to the program her resounding approval. The group was somewhat reluctant about making participation optional, but Denise was able to show how, by putting some fun activities at the beginning, the students would begin participating in what basically were games. And of course the natural place in the school day for these kind of activities was in P.E. Finally, organizing the program components in this way made scheduling the exercises in the school day trivial. No longer would it be necessary to reserve blocks of time for the program and that made accommodating absent students much easier. On the whole, the recommended changes were accepted with little fuss and the Ed School group only needed to tweak the exercise timings to allow for the changes.

Denise was sent home with many thanks, accolades, and a nice honorarium from the Education Ministry. Of course, she gave credit to Tom, with Lynette and Amelia and her friends getting a favorable mention too. The British prime minister was delighted to find that her government was still intact after Denise's visit, and she was heard making the suggestion that Denise's honorarium should be doubled in gratitude. Denise brought Tom's Avery Program ideas back home with her and forwarded them to Cindy; soon the Stateside schools had adopted the revisions too.

Kevin started his graduate program at Westphalia University that fall, and Denise began her medical school studies then too. Jeremy and Amelia traveled to the U.S. in mid-August to begin their college studies; together with the Corises, they moved into a large home which Kevin had purchased, located a short distance away from the university. In addition to being assigned a special project of studying the issue of bringing health care to poor rural communities in the U.S. in Gerston's Columbia Institute of Economics, Amelia continued to work for the Coris Foundation; Kevin appointed her as the managing director of the U.S. office he set up, and gave her a small staff; they were to develop training materials for conducting cultural missions in third-world countries. Jeremy, together with his beginning his university studies, began an internship working in the Columbia Institute of Economics in the international law area.

The following year, both Tom and Lynette were offered scholarships to Westphalia University, to

be granted after they had completed their year twelve studies; Tom was considering studying applied mathematics with a view to specializing in economics, while Lynette had virtually settled on pursuing a career in psychiatry.

The Naked in School Program now only existed as a memory, a memory of a past mistake, while the revised Avery-Denison Program was being slowly adopted, in several different forms, as part of the country's high schools' physical education classes. Some determined kids had beat the system—in two countries—and all was well.

The End