



far more than just yoga

My girlfriend, Tammie, and I made the decision to leave our husbands at home and treat ourselves to a yoga retreat weekend. We had heard about a quiet, meditative place in the mountains, complete with hot springs, and thought it sounded just right for two high-powered women who could use a little slowing down.

We excitedly drove along the two lane highway on our way to “the spa” when my car died. It simply stopped. We took the set-back in stride, calling for a tow truck and waiting patiently alongside the road. A mechanic in the nearest town told us he could fix the problem the following Tuesday, so we parked it on the street and tried to find a ride. This little town had no taxis, buses or rental cars. We were stuck.

We finally spoke to a police officer who kindly offered to give us a lift. When we told him where we were going, he gave us a long, searching look and said, “really,” in a voice that would mean more to us as the weekend progressed. We loaded all our stuff into his patrol car, and he drove us 10 miles out of town to the place. When we pulled up to the office, a guy with long dreadlocks piled on his head stared at us. Here were two professional women getting out of a police car with way too much luggage. The police officer smiled a knowing smile and said, “Well, ladies, have a delightful weekend.” I turned to Tammie and said, “We are not in Kansas anymore, Toto.” She nodded.

Our room was located up a huge hill. The front desk guy called security to drive us there because there was no way we could get all our stuff up this half-mile hill. When we checked into our room we found out that it did not have its own bathroom. Trying to keep our adventurous spirit alive, which was getting a bit strained at this point, we trotted down to the communal bathroom. Both Tammie and I stopped dead in our tracks as we saw the unisex sign on the door. We took a deep breath and plunged in. To our relief, there was no one inside...this time.

What we really needed was to sit in the hot springs and let the cares of the long day wash away. We grabbed our bathing suits and hiked the half mile back to the springs area. As we entered the area, the sign “clothing optional” screamed at us like a siren. Tammie and I looked at each other with wide eyes. “We are adult women,” I offered bravely. “Yes, we have seen naked people before. I work in a hospital. I see naked people all the time,” Tammie squeaked, as she

gawked at the sign. “I just don’t know if I have it in me to put all my wobbly bits out for everyone to see.” I reasoned, “Optional is the operative word here. We can wear our bathing suits, right? Who cares if someone else wants to be naked. Right?” With our backs straight we walked into the co-ed locker room.

Tammie hissed in my ear, “I don’t know where to put my eyes.” I followed her gaze to the naked man on the far side of the room and gulped. I quickly busied myself putting my things in a locker and wished fervently that I had donned my suit back in our room. We both made record time stripping and putting our suits on. I swear we did it without ever being really naked. It was creative and comical to say the least.

Strolling out to the pools, we tried our best to look nonchalant. There were naked people everywhere. In fact, we were standing out like Christmas trees in July wearing our colorful suits, chosen carefully to slim, control and flatter the figure. All of a sudden, my color-coordinated sarong wrap felt like overkill. Actually, anything beyond my birthday suit was overkill.

Quickly immersing ourselves in the gloriously hot water we pretended to be just one of the folks enjoying the pool. If Tammie could have managed to blink a few times, we might have pulled it off with a bit more aplomb. I could not see my own face, but I bet my tight smile looked just like I had been sucking on lemons. Our façade lasted fairly well until a naked man strolled down the steps next to Tammie’s head and stopped with his mid-section just about eye level with those wide, non-blinking eyes of her. She dove under water and came up on the other side of me.

As I calmed my racing brain, I was able to notice something interesting. There were people of all body sizes and types walking between the hot pools. A woman who must have been in her 80’s slid her wobbly bits right into the pool and gave me a warm smile. Another woman, who probably would have worn a size 4x bathing suit if she had one, stood outside the pool talking softly to a very short, stocky man.

Later in the café, Tammie and I talked about how silly we were feeling and how strange our behavior must have seemed to people who were not putting near the attention on body issues that we were. We were far more “naked” than any of the people in the pool area. I sighed and told Tammie, “I guess we’re just new to this nakedity thing.” ☺