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True to Graham's word there are only women here. But they don't look anything like my neighborhood Garden Club. There are women with tattoos, thigh-highs, biker gear, and pierced tongues. There are women in short skirts, lingerie, and one in a metallic bikini. They are playing a game where everyone had written down a question on a slip of paper and put it in a jar; whoever pulled out a question had to answer it. As I walk in, the game is suspended midpull, so everyone can come over and hug me and kiss my cheek and get me a tequila shooter. As the newcomer, I'm asked to write down a question right then and there, just as a woman named Mollie announces that she has gotten a new piercing in a very private place. There is a group "oooooo" as she steps out of her jeans to show us what looks to me like the most painful thing I can ever imagine, and I have had natural childbirth. I try not to wince.

That's when someone pulls my question out of the hat. It says simply, "What is the current style of bikini waxing?"

I have never seen so many pants go down at once in my whole life, and I used to potty-train preschoolers. Every girl there wants to show me the very latest in trendy trimming. Note to self: This is *not* your mother's bikini wax.

First up, Ellie insists that bare is the new garter belt. She's in the middle of thirty laser treatments to have all of her pubic hair removed.

"Does it hurt?" I ask, definitely wincing.

"Like a motherfucker," she says proudly.

Lucinda agrees with the bare-is-best look, but she prefers

## Finding Your Sensual Goddess

waxing. (I hear later that she's having a fling with her aesthetician.) A few other girls say that a "landing strip" is the preferred look (preferred by men or women? I'm not sure). A landing strip is when you remove all of your pubic hair save for a strip about two inches long and half an inch wide in the very center. Except nobody at the party says pubic hair, okay?

Well, I got my answer! Completely bare or mostly bare were the only acceptable looks, unless there were additions such as tattoos or piercings. I can tell you that no one had the au naturel look that every *Playboy* centerfold from the 1950s to the 1980s sported. That's what I get for divorcing at the turn of the century.

As bizarre as this girl-party was, I really was glad for the knowledge. Who else could I have asked about trimming and tweezing and Trojans? *Now*, I thought, *if I ever do get naked again, at least I won't look like a born-again virgin.*

I reported back to Graham who, of course, said I could have just asked him. What, and missed out on the debate of hot wax versus laser? Silicone versus saline? Men versus women?

And that's when Graham said he was taking me on a field trip. Out of my comfort zone. To a swingers' club.

Now, being a writer, I have a certain overwhelming curiosity about . . . well, just about everything. I was the first company editor to ride in IBM's electronic warehouse machine, hovering six stories high for eight hours. I once drove four hours just to go dancing on top of a glass-enclosed shark pool and lived to write about it. I did my first rock climb in thirty-degree weather on my fortieth birthday and the next year tried to learn to snowboard

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in Colorado. I've written about Jews for Jesus, *Vagina Monologues*, and the transsexual talent show at Crazy Pete's. But a swingers' club? I was game for the exploration, I was just a little apprehensive about what we'd be exploring.

As soon as we walk in, we are astonished: The fee is outrageous. You have to pay for a three-month membership even if you swear you're never coming back; it's steep, purportedly, to keep the riffraff out. If all that separates the sleazy from the acceptable is a cover charge, we'd have a much different electoral process.

So we pay and we walk inside and immediately I burst out laughing. Straight ahead of me is the largest, shiniest, fullest buffet bar I have ever seen. It is a smorgasbord, really, of roasts and potatoes, veggies and casseroles, turkey breasts and gravy and fruit salad and cheesecake. Do you really want to eat from a buffet in a sex club? If I'm going to be half naked in front of people, I'm not eating for days.

Graham grabs my arm and hisses for me to stop laughing, which I do, as soon as I look on the dance floor. There are two women dancing—how can I say this?—upside down. When I look more closely, I see that they are hanging from a bar attached to the ceiling of the dance floor, and since they are upside down we can see that their mothers would be proud: They remembered the advice about clean underwear, and so they chose not to wear any at all. They are kissing several other men and women who