

city *haught* left me? I've changed since I moved to Vermont. I make up new words. I'm getting to know myself. Slowly.

The sales lady tossed some flimsy things on the counter for me and I snatched them up and escaped to the dressing room, to hide. On the way in, half-closed curtains offered alarming glimpses of pale, rolling flesh and hands pushing and pulling at corsets. Black satin, lace trim corsets. I drew a pink curtain closed behind me and tried to catch my breath. How was it that

tossed in a couple more.

"Whaddaya think?"

"Oh," I said, "thanks, uh."

I heard her in the front of the store, talking to mom.

"What is she looking for?" Naturally the sales lady was confused by my response. "Is she getting married?"

"No!" mom said, or shouted, rather. "She just *did* get married. She wants something *sexy!*" Oh? That one with the thighs on the poster -- that's sexy, I thought. *You're getting warmer!* said my little voice.

this one go on? The sales lady came back and looked at the bra I was in.

"It doesn't fit," I said, overcome.

"Sure it does," she said, and she started pinching at the fabric, touching my breasts, telling me they could make a little adjustment here, or here. An adjustment? I thought, that's an understatement. *Argh!* the voice was making my chest hurt, *You're right on it! Come on! I'm getting laryngitis here!*

"It doesn't fit," I said again, although the bra was fine, really. The tiny closet of a dressing room was stifling.

Meanwhile a conversation from the front of the store rose in volume. And now the whole store was talking, from the front of the store, from each of the dressing rooms.

"She just got married," someone said. "That's when it matters. She should wear something sexy."

"It doesn't last -- it doesn't matter after a while. Twenty years I'm married and I know, it doesn't matter."

"It doesn't matter?! It ALWAYS matters!" came the thundering last word.

"Oh, you're out!" mom shouted.

"Not yet," sighed the voice.

"What did you get?" mom wanted to know. I showed her one white, one pink, and one black.

"Good," mom said, and that was all. Thank God, I thought.

"All imported," the sales lady was saying, "25 percent discount every day." ▼

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"Oohhhh!" said the sales lady, "something sexy!"

The next bras that came flying through the pink curtain were sexy. And the sexier they were, the worse I felt. Delicate black lace and tiny pearls. Pretty. Satin, shimmery sheer pink. Lace on top and satin below. Now how does

Miss Pauline asked me in passing, "Whaddaya looking for?" I had no idea where to start. My chest was pounding now. My ears were ringing.

they were so shameless, and I, so shamed? How could they be so accepting of themselves, I wondered. Why can't I breathe, I wondered. I don't belong here, I thought. Well, keep going, anyway, I thought.

I was barely into the second bra when the sales lady threw open my curtain and

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