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Bev Potter

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Naked and Unafraid

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Wednesday February 28, 2024

By Bev Potter

My mother is 94 years old, and until a few months ago she lived quasi-independently under my watchful gaze.

And then, suddenly, she suffered twin medical emergencies that resulted in catastrophic loss of both memory and mobility, which forced me to place her in a nursing home.

As an only child, this means that I, too, have been placed in a nursing home.

Mom was never much of a movie lover, forcing me to pick through the limited cable TV options for something that will hold her interest over the long hours of waiting for whatever it is we're waiting for.

We have three go-to reality TV shows: a series that follows a black-owned veterinary practice in Houston; another series about game wardens in Minnesota; and the Discovery Channel's *Naked and Afraid*.

In case you aren't familiar, *Naked and Afraid* plops two naked people down in the wilderness for 21 days and films the result. The pair consists of a man and a woman for maximum cringe. Sometimes there are teams of naked people. There is no prize, unless you count dramatic weight loss from repeatedly failing to kill a duck.

My elderly mother is obsessed with this television show.

"That's a lot of naked butts," she'll say as a trio of bedraggled contestants pick their way barefoot through the Serengeti. One man is wearing a grass kilt. Another is wearing a bush on his head. A woman is bringing up the rear, so to speak. All the naughty bits are blurred out, but you know. You know.

Sometimes the naked people are in a jungle, sometimes they're on a mountainside. There are scorpions and snakes and rhinoceroses, thorns like knitting needles, and lots and lots of complaining.

I would last approximately five minutes. One sharp rock under my tender tootsies and I'd be screaming for a producer to take me home.

But I have no doubt that my mom would excel and finish the 21-day adventure with a PSR (Primitive Survival Rating) of 10. She grew up in the hills of Kentucky during the Depression. She neither whines nor complains, but simply endures.

When the nurse asks how her day has been, she smiles and says, "Good!"

She tells the housekeeper that it's as easy to be happy as it is to be sad, so you might as well be happy.

She can't stand up without assistance. She can't swallow food or clean herself. She thinks that she's at home and that when she calls out, our neighbors hear her and come from their homes to help.

"That's a lot of naked butts."

My mom might leave this world naked, but she'll be completely unafraid.

—Bev Potter

Legal secretary by day, Bev blogs regularly on Medium. She received an honorable mention for her essay "Naked and Unafraid" in the 2024 Erma Bombeck Writing Competition in the local human interest category. Her weekly newsletter is [Bev Has All The Answers](#) on Substack. Contributor to the *Funny Times* and the *Christian Science Monitor*.