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A Visit to the Doctor

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A Visit to the Doctor

When I run a hard workout, I sound like a train when I breathe. For me, a hard workout can be running four miles in twenty-six minutes or ten times two hundred meters as fast as I can. In the middle of the workout I start feeling like I am breathing through a straw, and it reflects in my pace. My coach, Philip Schoensee, therefore brought me to the athletic department at Children's Hospital last Tuesday.

The physician introduced himself, then I tried to describe my problem. It was very difficult to explain what it feels like when I am running, especially since the doctor uses technical terms, and I hardly know the correct terms in everyday English, being Scandinavian myself.

After a long conversation, the physician asked me to take off my T-shirt so that he could listen to my lungs. He left the examination room after telling me to sit up on the bench and knock on the inside of the door when I was ready. I struggled to my feet trying to get seated on the high bench, but although it took me a while to climb up, I had a vague feeling I was given time for another reason than climbing. A thought that crumpled my mind was why the physician left the room when all I had to do was pull off my T-shirt, but then I remembered that American girls wear bras and that they on the whole are more modest and embarrassed over their bodies than we Swedish girls are.

Beside me on the bench there was a piece of paper that almost looked like a napkin. I considered hiding under the napkin since I do not wear a bra, and the doctor might think I was rude if I sat topless with only my bermuda shorts on. But I told myself that on the day of my birth, a doctor was the first person who ever saw me naked, so why should I have to be ashamed now? Another thought convinced me that I should not be uncomfortable. In the summertime, the sight of topless girls on the beaches in Sweden is very common. Swedish people are not even startled, since almost all the young girls walk around topless.

The physician interrupted my daydreaming by entering cautiously. When he saw me, he was taken aback, and he closed the door again so only his nose pointed in through the doorway. His deathly pale face grimaced and he stammered out: "Oh—I—I—I should have told you to cover yourself with the coversheet!" I explained calmly that I was not embarrassed and that he could enter the room. He had just closed the door and started the examination of my lungs when somebody rapped on the door. The physician lunged himself against the door to prevent two other doctors from entering.

"—I am examining her. I am examining her! Wait a little," he burst out agitatedly. He jumped back to me, covered me with the napkin-like sheet, and then he let the other men enter. He was probably uneasy because he was afraid his colleagues would think he was not doing his job properly. I sat with two hands under my cheek, trying to hold the coversheet over my upper body. It was quite difficult to shake hands with the two asthma specialists who entered, so I just nodded to them and said hello. I felt like Julia Roberts in *Pretty Woman*. I had an enjoyable time watching my physician getting flurried, looking from me to his colleagues and back. It was as if he were afraid I would tear off the coversheet and expose myself.

However, his colleagues assumed I had exercise-induced asthma, but they did not need to make any tests. My nervous physician was acting very strangely after his colleagues had left. He was obviously relieved, but the nerve-wracking event with me, the "blue-eyed, blonde Swedish girl" had left him burned-out in a way. When he continued his examination of my lungs, he covered my legs over the dressed part of my body as he listened to my breathing. Luckily, he had presence of mind enough to give me some medicine.

Leña Mjorndal