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**Connecting**  
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## When those bare facts reveal you're unsuitable

**L**AST WEEK, I PUT MYSELF through hell I went shopping for a bathing suit. For months, I'd avoided this miserable chore. I knew it could take hours, if not days. My friend Lynn offered to join the expedition. She and her husband were off to Santa Barbara, and she was suitless. It would be painful, she knew. She had a baby about three months ago, and despite hard work on her part, she hasn't quite regained her figure.

We entered the bathing suit department at Nordstrom and made a fast survey. I'm tall and reasonably thin, and you'd expect that I'd be a good candidate for this cruel garment, but sadly, this is not so.

After years of experience, I can size up bathing suits at a glance — too short in the torso, too wide in the ribs, too fussy, too low-cut in the leg, resulting in thigh-squeeze, cut too high in the leg, resulting in a depilatory nightmare, or strapless, resulting in a startling lack of privacy every time I lean over.

**OUT OF A SEA** of possibilities, I selected four tank suits, as well as four bikinis, and headed for the dressing room. Lynn followed, with six suits dangling from her arm. For moral support, we chose cubicles next to each other. Clothes and purses dropped to the floor.

Anguished sighs escaped from both of us. Things looked worse than they had even that morning, and definitely worse than they had last year.

I slipped into the first tank . . .

From the next room, I could hear groans. I asked Lynn how she was doing. She told me not to come in, under penalty of death. She wailed that she missed her body and would gladly give up her nursing-mother cleavage to get it back. You're such a bone, she wailed. They probably all fit you, she said.

You should see my disgusting thighs, I said.

Shut up, she said.

I started with the bikinis. Why not, I reasoned; I might as well show the flat stomach while I still had it. The bikinis, it turned out, were constructed for 16-year-olds. They did not seem to offer adequate coverage or control of human flesh.

**ANGRILY, I SNATCHED AN EMERALD** green number off its hanger. It had some style, as well as historical reference. It looked like it might have belonged to Marilyn Monroe. The bottom did not appear to have been cut for a prepubescent. The top looked as if it might be useful to an adult female. It even had a string that might hold it up in case I wanted to throw caution to the wind and *take a swim!* Full of hope, I slipped it on.

A miracle!

It was not disgusting. Don't get me wrong: It was not fabulous. Fabulous is seen only on 23-year-olds or on women who spend more time working out than they spend at work. I, for one, am much more familiar with my desk chair than I am with the Nautilus machine.

Lynn stuck her head in. She was fully dressed. She wondered if I'd had any luck. Well, what do you think, I asked, turning on a heel. Don't lie, I warned her. I'll know if you're lying, I said. I pointed to some thigh bulge.

It's great, she said, I hate you.

I jumped into my clothes and rushed to the cash register, waving 6 ounces of emerald green Lycra at \$10 per ounce. Lynn pulled out a credit card to pay for a navy blue tank suit.

You didn't let me see it on, I said.

I know, she said.

We were ready for lunch. ■

Cathryn Ramin's column appears on Mondays and Thursdays.