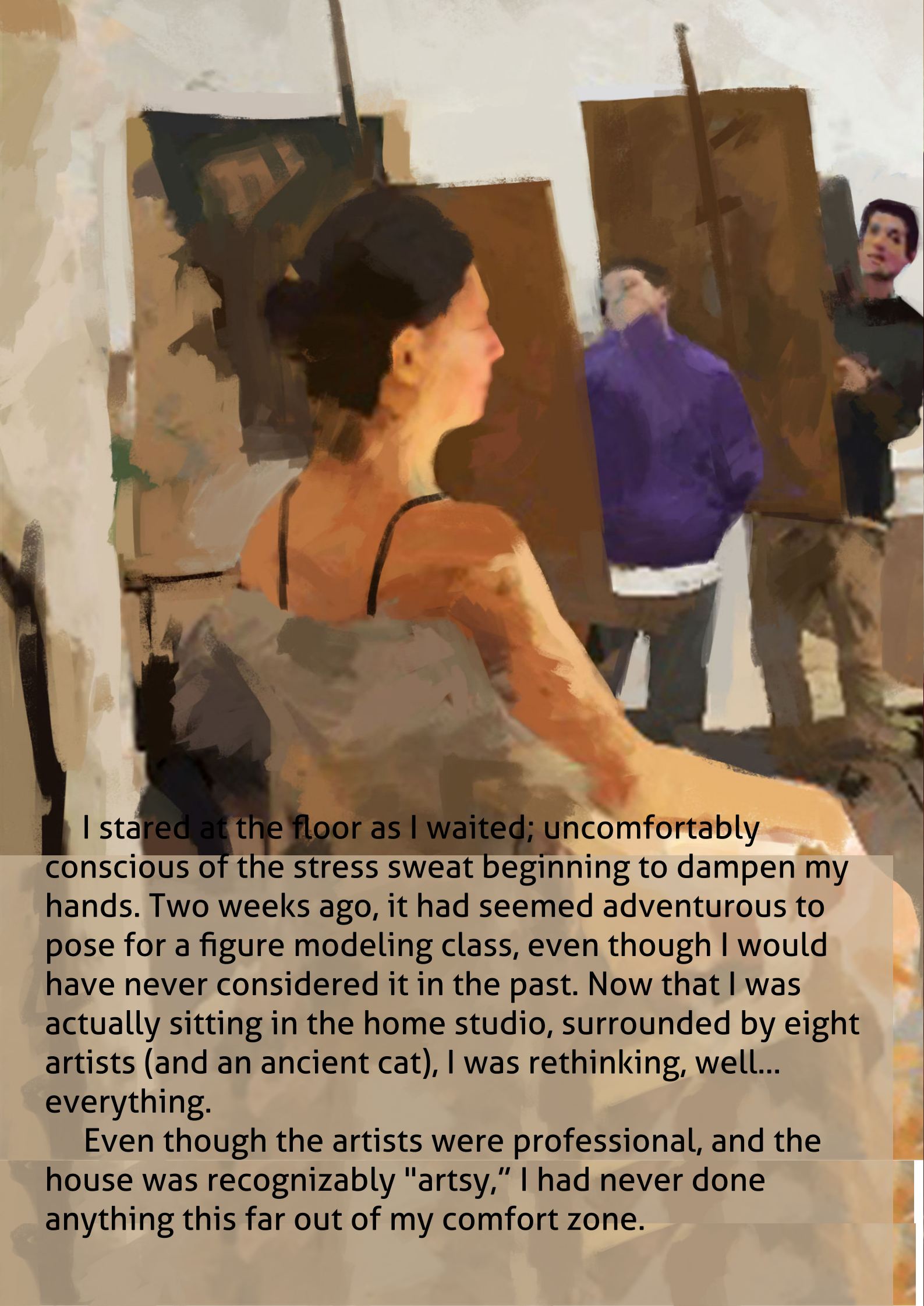




EIGHT STRANGERS

By MARIE VOTH

Illustrator : Deepak kumar singh



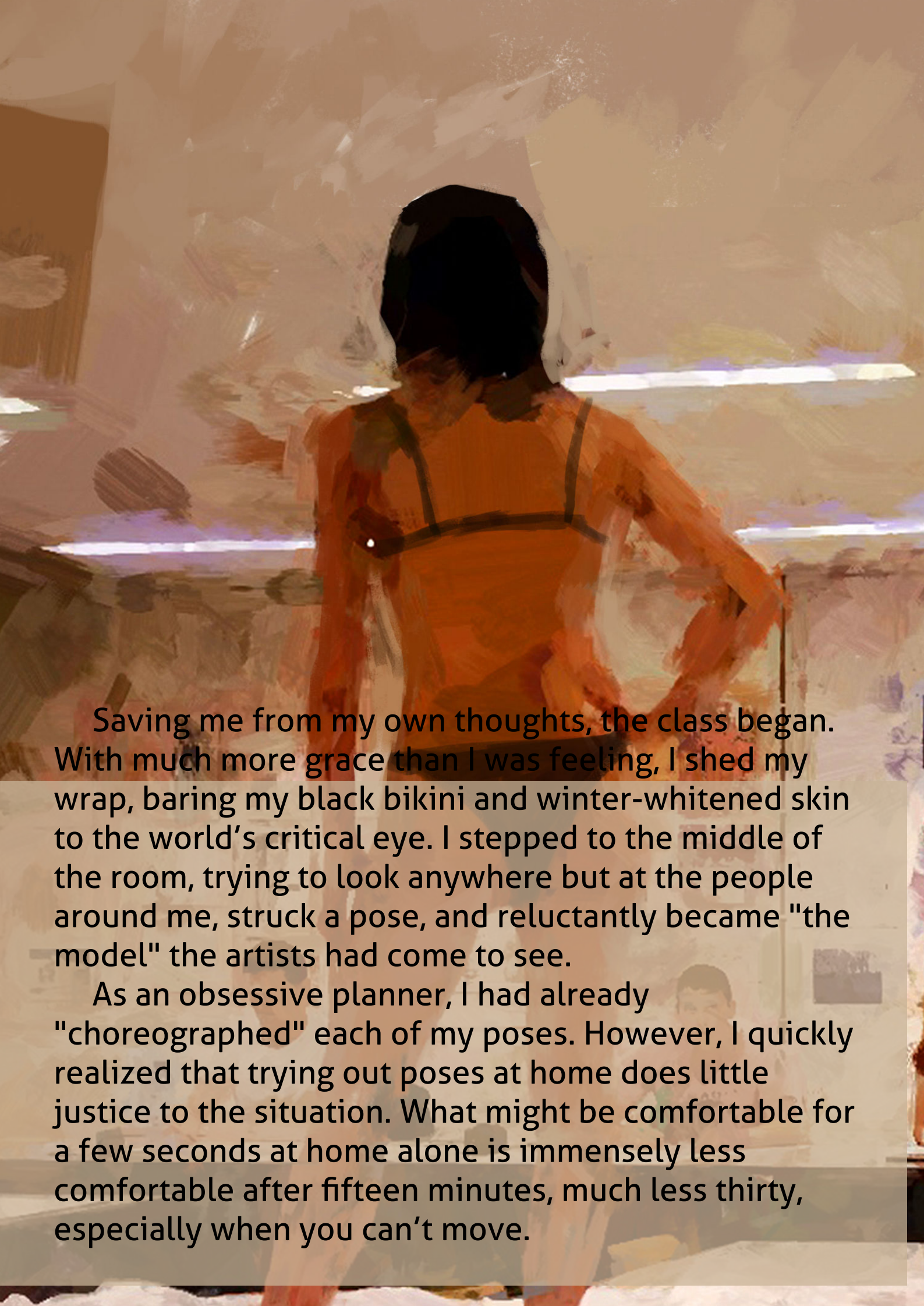
I stared at the floor as I waited; uncomfortably conscious of the stress sweat beginning to dampen my hands. Two weeks ago, it had seemed adventurous to pose for a figure modeling class, even though I would have never considered it in the past. Now that I was actually sitting in the home studio, surrounded by eight artists (and an ancient cat), I was rethinking, well... everything.

Even though the artists were professional, and the house was recognizably "artsy," I had never done anything this far out of my comfort zone.



Everyone started to settle; pulling out pencils, pens, and charcoal in dizzying variety. Easels went up, lights were turned down, drawing supplies were arranged, and small talk was made – all of it buzzing around me in a blur. The hostess smiled encouragingly at me and then outlined the class: a few warm-up poses, then three five minute, two fifteen minute, and two thirty minute poses to wrap up the class.

Thirty minutes, I thought to myself. How the heck am I supposed to hold perfectly still for thirty minutes?



Saving me from my own thoughts, the class began. With much more grace than I was feeling, I shed my wrap, baring my black bikini and winter-whitened skin to the world's critical eye. I stepped to the middle of the room, trying to look anywhere but at the people around me, struck a pose, and reluctantly became "the model" the artists had come to see.

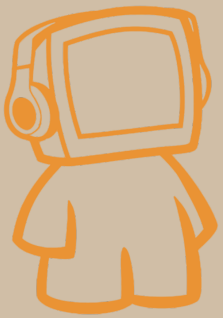
As an obsessive planner, I had already "choreographed" each of my poses. However, I quickly realized that trying out poses at home does little justice to the situation. What might be comfortable for a few seconds at home alone is immensely less comfortable after fifteen minutes, much less thirty, especially when you can't move.

I found myself improvising as the class progressed. Then finally, at some point during the two hours, it happened. It was no longer strange to have eight strangers staring me down, and, miraculously, I relaxed. The thirty minute poses were, as expected, a challenge – however, I did learn that, thankfully, "creatively lying on the floor" is an acceptable pose.

After class ended, the artists thanked me for being there, and I realized I was happy I had tried something new.

Two weeks later, I was back.





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