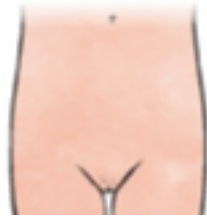
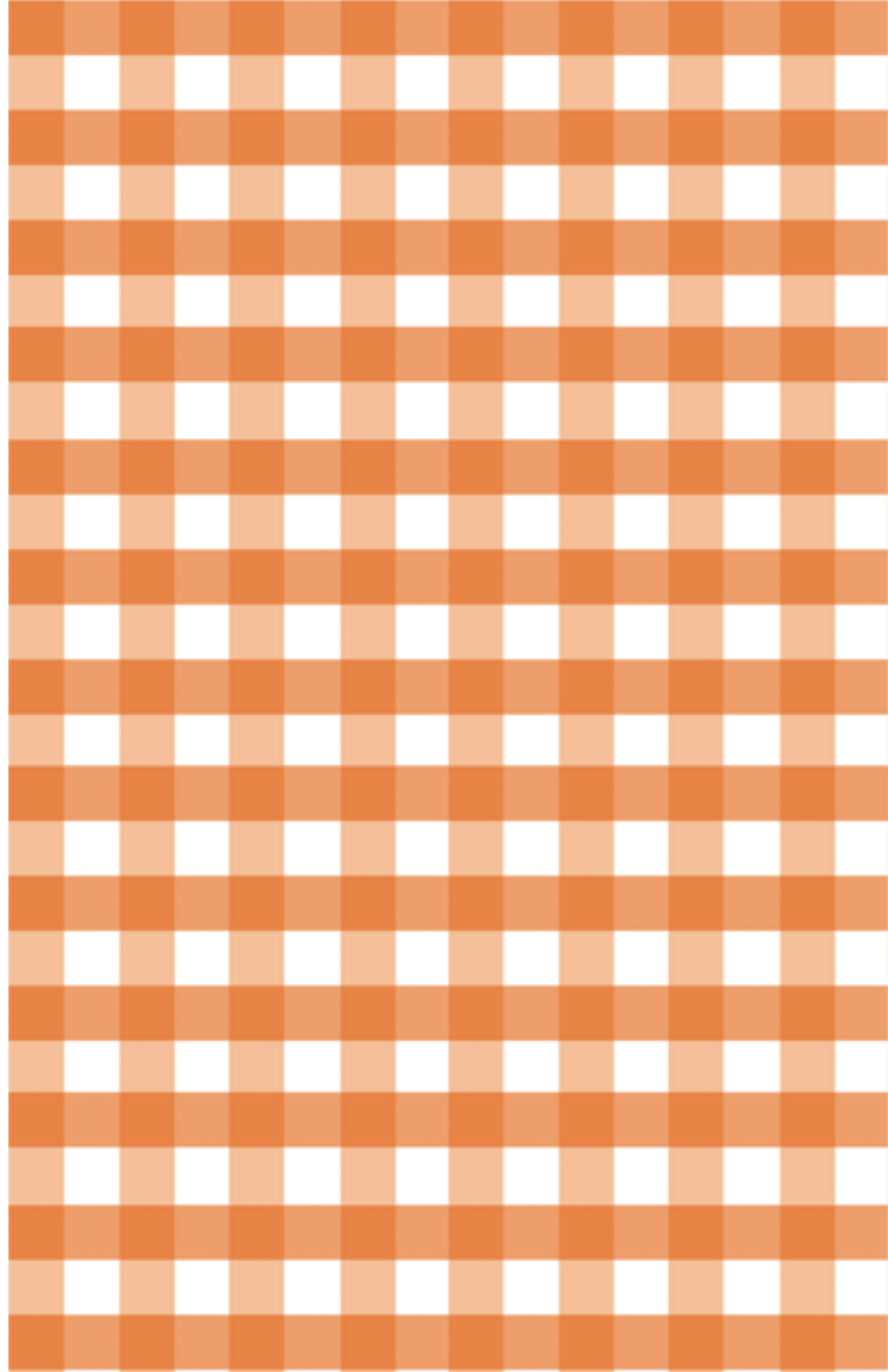


Pubic Hair



Linda Moyer



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I was nine when it happened. It was a beautiful summer day. A Saturday.

The day of my father's annual company picnic at a park in the foothills: tennis courts, volleyball courts, a baseball field, a swimming pool. Hamburgers and hotdogs, potato salad, peach pies, and lots and lots of apricots. I was so excited because we were going to see friends of my parents who had a little girl who adored me. I was nine and she was six. She was like my little sister. When our families would visit one another I was always in charge of taking care of her. We would play Barbies or tag or read books. I loved making believe I had a sister because I didn't like playing with my brother, who was two years younger than me and always getting into trouble and wetting his bed. Tammy, that was her name, idolized me. When it came time to leave she would cry and say she wanted to stay and play with me. She was an only child so I guess maybe she was a little lonely. But everything changed after the picnic.

I was what people called an “early developer.” By the third grade I was developing breasts and sprouting pubic hair. My mom gave me the menstrual cycle talk when I was nine, because she feared it would happen and I wouldn’t understand.

After the talk I went back to playing and being my tomboy self. I was very athletic and the fastest runner in my class. I could even beat the boys, sometimes. Luckily I didn’t start my period until after we watched the sex ed films in fifth grade. But learning about something doesn’t make the experience less upsetting.

But the day of the picnic I was a few years away from “womanhood.” It was hot and Tammy and I wanted to go swimming. My parents made sure that my brother and I learned how to swim so even at ten I was a very good swimmer. I could back stroke and breast stroke, side stroke and Australian crawl. I had yet to learn the butterfly stroke. (I never did.) I had a new two-piece swimming suit: orange gingham with white

piping. I couldn't wait to show it off. I was told to take Tammy to the changing rooms to change into our swimsuits. She had a one piece suit, blue with flowers. We were so excited to get in the pool.

I don't remember anything after the time in the changing room. I don't remember getting in the pool or swimming or playing Marco Polo. All I remember is that when we got home my mom said she had to have a talk with me. We sat on her bed and she held my hands. Tammy's mom said I couldn't dress in front of Tammy again. When I asked why, my mom said it was because of my pubic hair. Doesn't her mom have pubic hair? Doesn't she ever see her mom getting dressed? It's what Tammy's mom wants. But I didn't do anything wrong. Of course you didn't.

I remember feeling so hurt, as if I'd done something evil, as if having pubic hair at age nine was bad.

After that day I didn't feel comfortable around Tammy and her mother for a long time. I felt that they were always looking at me if there was something wrong with me.

I didn't realize that my innocence had been abused. I didn't realize that my pubic hair was something to be feared.



