

Emerald Lake Adventure

Short Story

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Only a couple of miles to the turnoff. Kim was looking forward to a relaxing day at Emerald Lake. It was early September and the summer had been quite hot. School was back in and the holiday season was over for most working folks so Kim was expecting very little company, if any.

Emerald Lake was a bit remote and there were two other lakes, much larger and more accessible to the larger towns that would capture any prospective lake goers. Being a Wednesday also helped keep the traffic to a bare minimum. In fact, he hadn't passed any other vehicles since that motorcycle went zooming in the other direction about an hour ago, obviously enjoying the curvy, well paved road.

This was an unplanned surprise. He and his partner, Jason, had finished the framing job a couple of days early. The next job didn't start until tomorrow so today he was going to try and tempt some trout to take his floating flies. Not that it mattered if they weren't biting, he was

looking forward to doffing the textiles and practice some *skinny fishing*, and perhaps some skinny dipping too, if the mood hit him – and if the water was not too cold.

He crested the last rise before the turnoff and was startled to see a vehicle parked on the shoulder not far from the turnoff. The hood was up and as he slowed down a woman stepped out from in front of the truck and started waving.

He pulled over and stopped a few yards in front of the stranded truck, seeing a few wisps of steam still drifting away from the engine compartment.

He turned off the engine and got out. The woman was walking towards him. She was of medium height and build and was wearing jeans and a checkered blouse – country style.

“Hi, my name is Tracy,” she started with a look of hesitancy, “is there any way you could help me out? I think I have a problem with one of my radiator hoses.”

“Hi Tracy, I’m Kim.” he said with a smile reaching out to shake her hand.

She took his hand and responded with a gentle handshake. “I’m supposed to be presenting a talk in Morinsville starting in about half an hour. But about 45 minutes ago a big puff of white smoke came out from under the hood and here I am. No cell service and no traffic. You are the first to come by.”

She had a very nice smile, despite the troubled look and her eyes had a twinkle in them that reminded him of his aunt.

“Well, Tracy, let’s see what we can do. I’m not an expert mechanic but I do most of the upkeep on my own vehicle so chances are we can figure out what’s wrong.”

She smiled. The troubled look was gone – and those eyes!

“Don’t stare!” he told himself, “chances are she’s married or has a boyfriend. Just be happy that you can help a lady in distress.”

They walked to her vehicle, an earlier model Chevy pickup.

“Kind of an odd vehicle for a woman to be driving ,” he said as they looked under the hood.

She chuckled, “I do permaculture design for Natural Organics Greenhouses. Most of the times when I am in the truck, there is something needing to be moved in the box.”

“There’s your problem,” he said pointing to one of the hoses, “looks like it split right where it’s attached to the radiator. I’ll grab my toolbox and we should have it off in no time.”

The hose came off easily but the length of the split rendered it useless. “Looks like we are going to have get a new one to replace it,” he said. “It’s a pretty standard hose so chances are

good the shop in Foxton has one in stock. Let's jump in my Jeep and find out."

"I hope that this isn't making you late for something important." she said "I really appreciate you stopping to help me but if you could bring me back to Foxton I could handle it from there."

"I could do that but if the lovely lady in distress . . .", he stopped and his face turned a lovely shade of red.

She smiled at him, "Continue, 'if the lovely lady in distress . . ."

"Okay," he started again, "if the lovely lady in distress has no objections, I will drive her to Foxton and if the part is in stock, I will bring her back to her pickup and install the part because the turnoff for the lake where I intend to spend the rest of the day is just a quarter mile further down the road."

She smiled at him, “I like the sound of that, especially the *lovely lady* part. Okay, let’s go.”

They climbed into the Jeep, Kim made a U-turn on the highway and headed back to Foxton.

“So how do you manage to get a day off in the middle of a week?” Tracy asked.

Kim explained how he was between two jobs and how he loved to get out into nature. “When I’m surrounded by trees, lakes, rolling hills and blue sky, I feel like I can much more easily hear God talking to me than when I’m surrounded by city bustle.”

“Oh, are you religious?”

Kim laughed, “That really depends on how one defines the word *religious*.”

He paused, thinking to himself, “Might as well be honest and upfront right away. If there is any chance this relationship can go anywhere, better she knows now rather than finding out later.”

Out loud he said, “As a matter of fact, I like to spend as much time as I can when I’m out in nature wearing nothing. I enjoy the wind and sun on my entire bare body. That usually puts me well outside what most people define as *religious*.”

She looked at him with a bit of a puzzled expression, “and God talks to you when you’re naked and not down on your knees with folded hands?”

“That’s the way He talked to Adam and Eve. He walked with them in the garden of Eden while they were both naked and not ashamed.”

“That’s interesting,” she said, “my parents brought me and my brothers up in a church where they would be horrified to find out that anyone even thought they could actually hear from God. I was bored silly most of the time and stopped going when I moved out to go to college.”

“Well there’s the shop, Foxton Auto Repair. Let’s hope they have the right hose. There’s a phone

booth over there if you need to call anybody, cell service is really marginal in this area.”

Foxton Auto Repair had the right hose and a gallon of coolant. Tracy made a couple of calls on the land line and they were on the way back to the pickup.

“My permaculture lecture has been rescheduled to next week.” stated Tracy.

“I guess that means it will be back to the greenhouse for the rest of the day.” said Kim.

“As a matter of fact, some maintenance work is being done in the area where I work. It was planned for today when I was going to be gone, so the boss said just to take the rest of the day off and make sure my vehicle is running good.”

“Well that was nice of the boss. What are you planning to do for the rest of the day? That hose will take all of ten minutes to get installed.”

“You know, one of the major components of permaculture is observation. Every physical location has it’s own ecosystem and often there are many variations even in a relatively small land area. That means that there is always something to learn when watching nature. You were talking about going to that lake to enjoy nature. Would you like some company for the day?”

“So how is a young man who is in the process of helping a lovely lady in distress supposed to refuse an offer like that? I would be happy to learn something more about nature. Most of the ladies I’ve dated were too interested in dress styles and makeup and I’m just not that kind of a guy. And I will even keep the clothes on if going *au naturel* would make you uncomfortable.”

“But there’s the pickup. Let’s see if we can get this hose on and make sure everything is working properly.”

A few minutes later the new hose was installed, the coolant topped up and the Chevy was happily purring smoothly. All was well in truck land.

“Your truck is ready to go!” declared Kim, “so now if you really would like to spend the rest of the day with me up at the lake, just follow me to the turnoff. There is a nice level area there where you can park the truck and we will take the Jeep up to the lake.”

It took about 15 minutes to drive the 3 1/2 miles of gravel to the lake. That gravel stretch was probably another reason why the lake had so few visitors.

“I only brought enough lunch for one,” said Kim, “but if you look over at that nice quiet spot there on the lake you can see some rings showing up on the surface. That means that there is some kind of food on the surface that the trout are eating. If I can get the right fly out there I might be able to catch a couple and we could cook them over a fire for lunch and save the sandwiches for later.”

“Okay,” said Tracy “I will relax in the sun and watch. My dad used to go fishing but his fishing rod was a lot shorter than yours and he always used marshmallows or worms for bait.”

“I’ll sometimes use equipment like that but there’s a different sense of accomplishment when you use a fly rod like this one. It’s as much an art as it is a sport.”

“I have just one more question before I head to the water. Would you be offended if I stripped down to fish nude?”

She looked at him with a grin, “We grew up pretty poor and even though my Mom and Dad were very religious they did not mind saving money by having their two sons and one daughter save on bath water by all bathing together. So go ahead, but I’m not sure if I am ready to join you yet.”

Kim pulled off his t-shirt, pulled down his shorts and put on his water runners. He grabbed his light fishing vest and rod and headed to the water.

Tracy watched as Kim slowly approached the little bay where all the *fish rings* were showing up. She was a bit surprised to see him sit down on a rock and spend a few minutes gazing over the water. Then he selected something from his vest and proceeded to tie it to the end of the line. She was really surprised when he gently waded into the water and started to pull a good length of line from his reel and let it pile up on the water by his knees. He then started waving the rod back and forth while the yellow line snaked in a big arc that reached just as far behind him as in front of him. Then one last wave of the rod and he held it still while the line snaked out for a long distance and gently settled onto the water.

“That sure is an unusual way of fishing.” she thought to herself, “No wonder he called it just as much an art as a sport.”

She watched as he slowly pulled the line in and then started the whole process all over again.

“Wow,” she thought, “there is something different about that man. Polite, helpful, says he hears

from God but is not religious and fishes naked. And he does it without any sense of shame or showmanship. It's like being naked is normal for him.”

She was starting to get very warm sitting in the late morning sun. She could move to the shade or she could just loose the jeans and blouse. She looked around just to be sure no one else was there. It was a natural precaution. The parking lot was empty when they had arrived and any vehicle coming up that gravel road would be easily heard long before they could be seen. But she checked anyway. Then, with a little bit of uneasiness, she unbuttoned the blouse and slipped it off her shoulders. The gentle breeze on her bare back felt very good. Some more buttons on the jeans and down they came.

“My, that feels a lot better,” she thought as she sat down again.

About 15 minutes later the uneasiness had worn off. She no longer continued to glance around every couple of minutes just to be sure no one

else was there. This was much better except for those stupid bra straps starting to itch. "I'm not ready for the topless look yet." she said to herself.

Just then there seemed to be a flurry of activity in the water. Kim's rod was bent in an arc and about 70 feet out in the lake she saw a fish jump clear out of the water. She jumped up and ran to the shore to get a better look. A few minutes later Kim was reaching for the net attached to his vest and proceeded to slip the net under the played out fish and lifted up the prize – a nice 1 1/2 pound rainbow trout.

He turned toward shore and saw Tracy standing there watching with an excited smile. He lifted up the net, "Looks like we are having fish for lunch." he called to her. He waded back to the shore. "Seems to me like you are starting to get comfortable. Let's go clean this fish and start the fire. I'm getting hungry."

She walked beside him back to the fish cleaning station. She had watched his reaction when he had first turned to see her in nothing but bra and

panties. He had glanced up and down quickly but immediately returned to look her eye to eye. She could not detect any look of lust or desire, a look that she had seen in the faces of more men than she cared to remember. He had just given her a warm smile and started to walk to the cleaning station as if it was the most normal thing in the world to be walking naked beside a girl in nothing but her underwear.

They got the fish cleaned, the fire started and soon the scent of trout frying in butter and lemon pepper was rising from the frying pan. He had a box of crackers, some cheese and a bottle of fruit juice and that was lunch.

They had to share his only fork but that just seemed to make lunch more fun.

As they sat in the grass air drying wet hands and faces Tracy looked over at Kim and asked, “You said that you are able to hear from God. How does that work?”

“Well,” started Kim slowly, “I can tell you how it happens but I don’t think anybody can really know how it works. It just seems that when I need to make a decision that is going to determine my future direction that I will hear a small, still voice inside of me prompting me about what my decision should be. It’s hard to describe but it feels like a thought that comes from my heart but the source of the thought is not my own heart. It’s like God is the source of the thought and He puts it into my heart, into my spirit, and then it’s communicated to my mind and it’s like I’m hearing a voice saying, ‘You should go right, not left’, or something like that. And it always comes with a sense of peace or joy, no anxiety or uneasiness.”

“Does it happen often?” she asked.

“That probably depends on me. It never happens when I’m really busy with work or entertainment or recreation. It’s when I slow down and take time to meditate on the scripture that I read regularly that it happens.”

Tracy looked thoughtful, “My parents took me to church for 18 years and I’ve never heard anything like what you just said.”

“I don’t think that’s unusual,” replied Kim, “I didn’t learn it in church either. Most guys preaching to a bunch of people really don’t want those people to know that they can hear from God themselves – it would make their positions as *The Oracle of God* quite redundant.”

“It’s getting really warm. There is a very nice trail that runs along the side of the lake. It is more of a walk than a hike but there are beautiful views of the lake and about half a mile along it goes around that hill and there are some good places to see the mountains out west.”

He stood up, reached out his hand, “Let’s go for a walk.”

She took his hand and got up, “Are you going like that?”

He laughed, “Yes, of course. But I do have a light day pack with a water bottle, shorts, t-shirt and windbreaker, just in case a freak storm shows up. There should be room for your jeans and blouse too.”

They packed the necessary items into the pack and started out. The trail was easy to find as it wound along the lake shore.

As they walked Tracy pointed out various aspects of permaculture design that were easy to see. What became very obvious is that there was some very intelligent design incorporated into every part of nature.

While passing through one of the open stretches she stopped. “These bra straps are getting really itchy.” She looked up at Kim with a hesitant smile, “You’re not going to attack me the moment you see a nipple, are you?”

Kim laughed. He took off the pack, opened the top and held it out toward Tracy. “What do you

think? There's lots of room for a bra in here, too.”

“My parents would say I'm a crazy sinner for doing this.” she said as she undid the front clasp and slipped off the bra. She tucked it into the pack.

“God said that He created you in His image and then declared that image to be very good.” replied Kim.

“You will have to show me where He says that.” she replied.

“Well, that's great news.” he said with a grin.

“What do mean by that?”

“In order for me to show you that, that means that we are going to have to get together another day and that means that today is not just a pleasant single day encounter. And that's great news!”

She looked up at him with that lovely sparkle in her eyes and said, “Yes, I guess that is what it means.”

They enjoyed the walk, they enjoyed the views, they were enjoying nature all around them and they were really enjoying each other’s company.

Three hours later they were back at the beach parking lot.

“I’m ready for a swim.” said Kim, “Are you coming?” and promptly headed for the water.

“This has been the most unusual day in my life,” thought Tracy, “I’ve just spent several hours topless, walking beside a man I only met this morning and he is completely nude and it feels normal!?”

She slowly lowered her panties and followed him to the water.

They waded, they swam, they splashed and just before they were done in the water he hugged her.

Looking down into her eyes with a beaming smile he said, "What beautiful eyes you have!" Then he let her go, gave her bottom a light smack and headed for shore.

They dried in the sun and ate the sandwiches and fruit he had brought for his lunch.

The sun was going down much earlier as the September days grew shorter. The temperature started to drop.

Reluctantly, Kim put his clothes back on. Tracy had dressed soon after coming out of the water. Kim had suggested it would be a good idea in order to prevent sunburn.

They packed all the items into the Jeep and started the slow trip back to the highway.

There Tracy hugged him goodbye, climbed into the pickup and started home.

Kim smiled. Saturday, 11:30, lunch at the outdoor cafe across the street from the Natural Organics Greenhouses.

What an adventure the day had been.