**Crash**

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While I was in college, spring break of my senior year was spent skiing in Colorado. The weather that April was fair and warm. In that snowy, high elevation environment, the sunny afternoons were sublimely comfortable, almost hot, chasing skiers into lightweight clothing. And many young women were skiing in swimwear to get a jump on their summer tans. I've always considered that a strange juxtaposition: bare skin set against a backdrop of mountain snowfields.  
  
On Thursday afternoon, I was skiing a black diamond run which, due to the warm weather and hordes of spring break skiers, had deteriorated into a minefield of moguls, ice, and crud, the latter, wet heavy snow. Two college girls shot past, the brunette leading the way in a racer-back teal one-piece and the sassy blonde in a hot pink string bikini that barely covered her bits. Both exhibited expert technique: short, precise, lightning-quick turns in the valleys between moguls and wherever pattern changes dictated, over the crests and down the backsides. Despite their talent, in my opinion they were going way too fast for the marginal conditions.  
  
A short distance ahead, bikini girl caught an inside edge on a mound of crud and BAM! fell hard on her left side. Instinctively, I slowed. She slid on a patch of ice then vaulted off the crest of a monster mogul, sending her hurtling through space, her arms and legs flailing. I slowed further. She crashed to earth with a sickening THUD! then tumbled head-over-heels down the mountain in a flurry of flying snow. Both skis popped out of their bindings, whirling away like helicopters. Skiers riding the chairlift above cut loose with a collective gasp. The violence of the crash was staggering.  
  
She slowed, rolled one last time, then came to a halt on her back on the uphill side of a mogul in the middle of the run. I turned my skis across the fall line and skidded to a halt to see if I could render aid. She wasn't moving. She appeared to be unconscious. Someone riding the lift overhead hollered, "I'll call the ski patrol." The girl's friend didn't see the crash and consequently, didn't stop; she was somewhere way down the mountain.  
  
The girl's equipment was gone; skis, poles and sunglasses, but those weren't the only items missing. So was her string bikini. Well, mostly; the top was AWOL and the brief, undone on the left side, was reduced to an ankle bracelet around her right boot. Her creamy white bikini shadow strongly suggested those patches of private flesh had never seen the light of day. Many times I've skied the Rockies during warm spring weather and seen bikini-clad young women take minor falls, often times resulting in nip slips and butt crack exposure. Always, they laughed it off. All in good fun. But never before had I witnessed virtual nakedness in the aftermath of a crash.  
  
Sprawled on her back, she was motionless.  
  
"You okay?" I shouted. No response.  
  
I released my skis from their bindings then, just uphill, rammed the tails into the snow to warn approaching skiers of the hazard. While I was doing that, she stirred, propped herself on one elbow, then tried to shake snow out of her short, shaggy blonde hair. Her neatly coifed pubis confirmed she was a natural blonde. I knelt beside her. "You okay?" This time she responded to my voice; she looked at me hollow-eyed, in shock, it seemed. And she seemed unaware of her exposure.  
  
She had a huge knot on her forehead and multiple abrasions marred her otherwise flawless skin, the consequence of tumbling across hard crusty snow. Her blue eyes flicked around haphazardly, finally fixing their focus down the length of her torso. Her expression slowly morphed from dazed to puzzled, to horrified as the reality of the situation congealed into consciousness.  
  
"Oh shit!" she blurted then sat bolt upright and covered her ample breasts with her left arm. Frantically, she tugged on her bikini brief with her right hand but the tiny pink garment was snagged on her boot buckles and wouldn't budge. The longer she struggled the more exasperated she became. Hyperventilating, it seemed she was on the verge of a panic attack. Her effort was futile so she gave up.  
  
She raised her head and looked at me with imploring eyes. "Can you help me please?" He voice was quiet and quavering.  
  
"Here," I said, then stripped off my T-shirt and held it out, offering a cover-up  
  
"Thanks." She took the shirt, but instead of tossing it on like I expected, she merely clutched it to her bosom, letting its length hang down in her lap.  
  
While I worked to untangle her brief, she settled down a bit, so I tried to calm her further with conversation. "I'm Ed. What's your name?" She didn't answer, so I let it go.  
  
Finally, she mumbled, "Emily."  
  
"So, Emily, what happened up there?" As soon as the words left my lips, I realized I'd put my foot in my mouth. Why would she want to relive her accident?  
  
"I . . . " She paused. Her brow furrowed. " . . . I don't remember." In my estimation Emily had sustained a concussion.  
  
Other skiers stopped to help. Some of them removed their skis then set about gathering Emily's wayward ski equipment which was scattered all over the mountainside. An endless procession of skiers riding the chairlift overhead focused their eyes on Emily's bare back and smidge of butt crack showing. The rude among them hooted and whistled. Before long, I was able to free her brief from bondage. Emily tugged it above her knee then tried to stand in order to pull it back into place, but I cautioned her to stay seated until the ski patrol had a chance to check her for serious injuries.  
  
She scowled. "I'm not just gonna sit here naked!" Her tone was irritated, not at me, I hoped.  
  
"Then put on the shirt!"  
  
"Oh, yeah." Her expression softened. During the five seconds required to properly align my shirt and toss it on, I enjoyed one final glimpse of her sizable rosy nipples. The shirt was long enough to provide total coverage, front and back. Emily calmed further and joked about her predicament. "My butt is sooo cold!" She managed a wan smile. While waiting for the ski patrol, she fiddled with her bikini brief and discovered the string hadn't just come untied; the left rear string had ripped away from the fabric, probably on first impact, rendering the tiny garment useless. "Oh, great," Emily muttered under her breath. A matronly skier skidded to a halt. She held out Emily's hot pink bikini top and said, "You'll be wantin' this sweetie." Emily took the top. "Thanks."  
  
A female ski patroller arrived on the scene. She took one look at Emily and immediately radioed for backup. She removed her skis then began assessing Emily's injuries. She swabbed the minor bleeding on her forehead. Shortly thereafter, a male ski patroller arrived on a snowmobile towing a sled gurney, onto which Emily was carefully bundled in blankets for evacuation off the mountain.  
  
"I'll get your shirt back to you somehow," Emily shouted as the male patroller slowly steered the snowmobile away for the trek to the first aid station at the mountain base.  
  
"Nah," I shouted back, "don't worry about it. Keep it for a souvenir." She smiled and waved. I waved back and continued watching until the snowmobile and gurney made the turn onto a catwalk and vanished in the spruce forest.  
  
I felt empathy for Emily, for the physical trauma she suffered and the embarrassment she felt after being unexpectedly and violently thrust into public nakedness. Even so, to this day I derive a bit of perverse pleasure whenever I recall, and visualize, the most spectacular wardrobe malfunction I've ever witnessed.  
  
I'm certain the day arrived when Emily was able to laugh about her misadventure. The T-shirt she kept would serve as a perennial reminder. Just before departing on spring break I found that shirt in the ski shop in my hometown and just had to buy it. It depicted a cartoon female streaker on skis, and underneath were emblazoned these words: Ski Naked.