**Summer at Cache Lake**

**Chapter 21: Date Night**  
  
After breakfast, Jill took the Jeep and drove in to Agency. As she approached town, her phone started vibrating, indicating the receipt of text messages. At the first opportunity, she pulled over. As she had expected, one was from Nick and related to the offered movie date. He listed the three movies that were playing at the multiplex in Stanton.  
  
Jill sent a quick reply. “Just got your text. See you at six at Elmer Franks! Looking forward to it. I’ll let you know if I have a movie preference after I’ve done a little research. Jill.”  
  
After hitting send, she put the Jeep in gear and headed on into Agency. When Nick had asked her out, she had not been planning on going; however, for various reasons, she had changed her mind. But during breakfast, she had found herself again reconsidering . . . due to her dream . . . her bottomless nightmare. She had concluded that it would be stupid to hold that against Nick. That dream had obviously been provoked by her overactive imagination and all the pressure the boys had been putting on her to show skin. Nick had only been to blame to the extent that he had offered to show her what kids in small towns did for fun.  
  
She made the post office her first stop. She had been regretting throwing Tyler’s letter away unopened. She checked the garbage, but as she had assumed, it had been emptied. The letter was gone.  
  
She didn’t dwell on that. Her interest in the letter was curiosity as much as anything. Even though they had been quite close, there was no recovery from his insensitive, ‘I can feel bottom’ comment.  
  
She was delighted to learn that the two books that she had ordered had arrived. She was almost done with ‘Crime and Punishment.’ The game of cat and mouse between Raskolnikov and Porfiry had been fascinating, but she had grown weary of it. Next she was planning to read, ‘Democracy in America’ by Alexis de Tocqueville. Given its nonfiction nature, she was expecting it to be rather dry.  
  
As she was getting back into the Jeep she received a reply from Nick, so she sat in the parking lot and watched movie trailers on her phone. She thought the romantic comedy sounded the best, but thinking that it might not be a good choice for a first date with a guy she wasn’t interested in getting romantically involved with, she decided to opt for the superhero movie. It had been out for a couple of weeks, meaning that seats would probably not be too hard to come by. She texted her preference to Nick and then headed to the grocery store.  
  
That afternoon she returned to the meadow where she had climbed the tree naked. In the end she settled on tanning topless. That had been the compromise that she had negotiated with herself after a protracted internal struggle. A voice within her had suggested she revisit nude tree climbing, but a more rational voice had argued that she keep her entire bikini on. That would of course have been the smart thing to do; however, she was convinced that the boys were a long ways away – just as she had been prior to floating the outlet.  
  
So she removed her top, but the bottoms stayed firmly in place – and she didn’t climb the tree. She eyed it longingly, but thinking of how horrific it would be to be seen or photographed nude, she turned her thoughts to the wildflowers.  
  
As the time to get ready for her date approached, she realized that she was looking forward to it a great deal. She loved Cache Lake, but she was feeling stir crazy. She needed a change of scenery as well as some human interaction.  
  
Nick was waiting for her when she pulled into Elmer Franks. Being mindful of her dream enhanced aversion to the idea of getting into his truck, she maneuvered things such that they ate their burgers in the Jeep. In a similar mindset, she volunteered to drive to Stanton. She guessed that Nick might be on to her, but being in the driver’s seat gave her something that she needed: a sense of being in control.  
  
To his credit, Nick did not ask or comment. After they had eaten, she followed him in his truck. He parked it in front of his house and climbed in with Jill for the drive to Stanton.  
  
During the movie, Jill kept her hands together in the center of her lap, hoping that Nick would not make a move and try to hold hands. Doing that made her think back to her first movie date with Tyler. On that date, she had done the opposite. Hoping that Tyler would take her hand, she had placed it on her leg close to him, even on the armrest at times, subtly hinting at her willingness to hold his hand.  
  
It had worked. That had been the first time that they had held hands. That had also been the first date on which they had kissed. It had been just a quick little goodnight kiss, but it had made Jill’s heart flutter. She smiled to herself recalling that fond memory. Even though their relationship had gone down in flames, she knew that she still had feelings for Tyler – or at least the Tyler that she had gotten to know at the start of their relationship.  
  
As Tyler had picked up on her body language, so did Nick. He made no effort to take her hand. Parts of the movie were entertaining, but Jill was glad when it was over.  
  
As they were exiting the theater, Nick ran into a group of friends. He introduced Jill all around. There were too many people for Jill to catch names. She was surprised to hear Nick introducing her as his date, and yet that was factually correct. He had asked her out and she had accepted. Once outside, she and Nick encountered a similar group of people, and the scene was repeated.  
  
Back in Agency the two of them returned to Elmer Franks for ice cream. Jill had suggested the idea, to head off Nick again bringing up alcohol and a ride up a logging road. She realized that she was being manipulative, but she was still feeling the need for control. She didn’t have a history of being assertive with the opposite sex, but one thing she knew beyond a shadow of a doubt – she was definitely not getting in his truck.  
  
The night at the pizza parlor, Jill had learned that Nick had done a lot of hiking and rock climbing. While eating their banana splits she learned all about his summer job. There was an aerial adventure park just outside of Stanton named Skyline Adventures. Nick had just managed to land his dream job there, working as a guide.  
  
From the way he introduced the topic, Jill guessed where he was taking the conversation. A few minutes later he proved her right by suggesting that they go there for their next date. They could go on his day off and he could be her personal guide on the rock climbing wall as well as on the ziplines.  
  
She did her best to act noncommittal, but she knew that she’d probably end up going with him. Rock climbing and ziplines sounded like a lot of fun! Nick couldn’t have known it, but he had chanced upon a date idea that she would have a very hard time turning down. The trick, Jill realized, would be to send solid signals so that Nick would understand that her interest was in a friendship, nothing more. She thought about just coming right out and telling him, but she didn’t want to do that. It might seem like a slap in the face.  
  
Not too much later, she was alone in the Jeep and driving back to the lake in the dark. Somehow she had managed to say goodnight without giving Nick any opportunity to attempt a goodnight kiss.  
  
She realized that she did like him. He was nice as well as fun to be around. She was just a bit bothered by the fact that he was three years older, and she knew that at the end of summer she’d be going off to college. It was her intent to go without leaving any kind of relationship back home. Her plan was to show up at college single, completely unencumbered as far as boys were concerned. That was very important to her – a clean break!  
  
Once back at the lake, she caught a whiff of the campfire out on the point. Some nights she could smell it, others not, surely depending on which way the wind was blowing.  
She thought about heading out there in hopes that she’d be allowed to hang out and roast marshmallows. Knowing full well where that conversation would go, she went to bed instead.  
  
The voice in her head was back – again urging her to head out for another late night excursion. Somehow she managed to resist that temptation as well. She tried to be content with her date and her banana split, but she was still sad about never getting to roast marshmallows – and having to go to sleep without wandering around a little in just her panties – or less. She knew she needed to go back to playing it safe. If there was a lesson to be learned from the outlet debacle, it was that.  
  
The next night the temptation was even greater. She again did battle with her urges, but did eventually crawl out of her tent wearing just a pair of panties. This time they were black. If she was going to be sneaking around in next to nothing, she might as well give herself the best chance of not being seen.  
  
She made a distinct point of leaving the tent unzipped. She was still trying to reconstruct if she had zipped it up the night she had gone to the bridge.  
  
In her bare feet, she made her way quietly out to the lakeshore, pausing occasionally to listen. The moon would rise later in the evening, but as it was still below the horizon, visibility in the forest was very low. Once at the lake, Jill stopped to enjoy the view. The number of stars visible was truly astounding, even the Milky Way, running parallel to the Northern Cross, was easy to pick out.  
  
Jill felt very exposed standing there on the beach bare-chested. She made herself keep her hands behind her back, holding one wrist with her other hand, to maximize the feeling of vulnerability. Something about having her nipples bare in the night air caused a tingling sensation. Having her arms back also brought to mind Ryan’s comments about her shoulders and how nicely she carried herself, bringing a smile to her lips.  
  
While was avoiding admitting it to herself, she knew that being topless could lead to arousal. On the rare instances when she would allow herself to ponder her attraction to venturing out nearly naked, she would invariably end up considering the connection.  
  
After spending a few minutes looking at the stars, Jill turned, heading north towards the log containing their initials. This was going to be her third time topless at the log, not counting the prior August.  
  
Making her way cautiously along, she was again conscious that she was smelling the boys’ campfire.  
  
Once at the log, she sat down and spent a little more time soaking in the view and contemplating how her diamond hard nipples seemed thrilled with the slightly crisp night air. It was such a nice evening, and she was enjoying herself too much to just head back to her tent, and yet that was what she needed to do. She should go back to her tent and go to bed. The voice of reason told her to do that, and yet she knew that if she did she’d be lying there awake for hours.  
  
Again ignoring her better judgement, Jill decided to continue her adventure just a little bit farther north. Back on her feet, she made her way cautiously in the direction of the camp near the point. She concentrated on placing each foot carefully and transferring her weight silently.  
  
After about a hundred yards, she caught sight of a few trees that were being lit by the orange glow of the campfire. Moving stealthily forward she passed a large stand of trees, and for the first time caught a tiny glimpse of the flames themselves through the trees ahead. She was still quite far, so the risk of detection was essentially nil, she reasoned.  
  
Keeping to the shadows, she continued northward. The little voice inside her head held its breath. She had no plan, no strategy. Like the moth drawn toward the light, the tall athletic girl dressed only in panties approached the boys’ camp one small step at a time. She tried to imagine what would happen if the boys caught her there; a shiver rippled through her body. She could sneak around a little at night, but she obviously couldn’t let that happen.  
  
Suddenly she heard laughter and froze. After a minute or so she moved closer to the tree just in front of her and crouched down to peer through the branches. Way up ahead she could make out a few details of the boys’ camp. The fire was low, looking as if it could use another log. One of the boys, she was uncertain who, had his back to her. She was looking at the other from the side.  
  
For more than a minute, she stayed stock still, watching, scarcely daring to breathe. Something about spying on them intrigued her. Looping to the left, she advanced one group of trees while at the same time moving closer to the lake.  
  
She could tell that they were talking, but she could only really hear their voices when they laughed. Seeing that they were fully occupied with their conversation gave her what she knew might be a false sense of security. Crouching low, she slipped past yet another tree, working her way still closer.  
  
Her next hiding spot turned out to be nearly ideal, for it was behind a group of small trees that had many low branches. From that location, she was able to hear actual words. She heard her own name mentioned. Breathing as quietly as she could in order to be able to hear, she concentrated on trying to piece together what was being said, and yet the distance was still too great. Try as she might, she could only make out an occasional word or phrase.  
  
Again, moving carefully to the left, she set her sights on the next stand of trees. Beyond that she knew that she would not be able to advance any farther. There were a few individual trees closer to the fire, but she knew that it would be foolhardy to attempt to move up behind any of them. She was being quite daring, she realized, but she was being very careful. She was not willing to do anything that involved any real risk of detection.  
  
Once she had achieved the next vantage point, she crouched down and silently leaned to the side to peer around the trunk. As she had moved so far to the left, she was seeing both boys largely from behind. That had been her aim. They were angled toward each other and she could see the silhouette of an ear on each boy’s head.  
  
Ryan was roasting something, surely a marshmallow. As she watched, David leaned forward and stirred the coals with a stick or his own marshmallow fork.  
  
“Stop that,” she heard Ryan say. She knew why he was complaining, Messing with the fire while someone was roasting a marshmallow might cause it to catch fire. A bit later she heard him remark, “Jill is the undisputed marshmallow roasting champion.”  
  
Jill was surprised to hear him say it, but not surprised by the comment itself. She had the patience to do it right, turning the marshmallow at a slow, steady speed, maintaining the ideal distance from the coals. In that manner, she could get her marshmallows to inflate and then brown evenly. In contrast, the boys always seemed to be in too much of a hurry. That caused their marshmallows to darken too quickly or catch fire.

**Chapter 22: The Campfire**  
  
“Stop stirring,” she heard Ryan complain when David again stirred the coals. He didn’t seem to care and a moment later Ryan took his marshmallow off of his fork and took a bite.  
  
Jill kept as still as she could. She knew it was important, especially during pauses in their conversation.  
  
As Ryan finished his marshmallow, she saw him stand up. He walked to the table and set his fork down. She held her breath. “…take a leak,” she heard him remark. With that he moved off into the forest, heading straight away from the lake.  
  
After watching him disappear into the trees, she shifted her attention to David. He leaned back and then glanced up at the column of smoke rising into the night sky. She tensed up as he too rose to his feet. He stretched, but then made his way over to the woodpile. To her relief, he picked out a log, returning with it to the fire.  
  
He placed the log on the fire and then used a stick to push it into position. During that process, his face was well lit. Once he was happy with its location, he picked up a marshmallow and placed it on a fork. As Jill studied him, he returned to his chair and went about roasting it.  
  
Jill found herself wishing that she was with him, roasting her own marshmallow. Spying from the trees was fun, but she could almost taste the s’more – the crispy, smoky marshmallow melting into the chocolate. At one point she had tried to talk her grandparents into making a fire of their own. She had needed to drop that subject when they had told her that she should simply go out to the point and share the boys’ fire.  
  
In the next instant the forest was flooded with light. Still in her crouched position, she snapped her head around to see that the beam of a high-powered flashlight was trained on her from behind. She saw Ryan’s silhouette as she realized how bad her predicament was.  
  
“You were right!” he shouted. “We’ve got a spy.” With a hearty laugh he added, “A nearly naked spy!”  
  
Jill panicked. Throwing her arms around her upper body, she hopped up and bolted straight away from the light.  
  
“Got’cha!” exclaimed David as she ran into him and felt his arms wrap around her.  
  
She tried to squirm free, but with his bear hug holding her arms against her body, she was at a distinct disadvantage.  
  
“Let go of me! Let go of me!” she yelled, twisting and turning; however, her unwillingness to remove her arms from her chest added to her inability to fight her way free.  
  
“What’s the rush, Jilly?” asked David with a chuckle. “Ryan, not in our eyes,” he added.  
  
Ryan dropped the light to their feet as he came up. “What a wonderful catch!”  
  
“Please, David. Please let me go…” she pleaded. “I want to go.”  
  
“Like I said, what’s the rush?”  
  
“Please . . . so embarrassing.”  
  
“Sit with us,” countered David. “We’ve missed your company.”  
  
Jill’s heart was pounding, but she realized that she had been caught. Running off wouldn’t change that.  
  
“Will you just look at what we have here?!” said Ryan, gloating shamelessly.  
  
Jill turned her head to hide her face from Ryan. How could she have been so stupid?  
  
“Pease, David,” she repeated, wishing herself miles away.  
  
“I don’t want you to go. And you don’t really want to go.”  
  
“I do,” she said, trembling.  
  
“But we’ve got a nice fire. Join us!” proposed Ryan.  
  
She looked past David at the fire and realized that part of her wanted to accept the invitation. Indeed, she’d been longing for an invitation. “But I’m not dressed,” she said quietly, stating the obvious.  
  
“I don’t mind,” said David. “Ryan?”  
  
“Not at all,” he replied. “Let me roast you a marshmallow, Jill.” With that Ryan turned off the flashlight and returned to the fire. As Jill watched, he picked up a roasting fork and got a marshmallow from the bag on the table.  
  
“It’s alright, Jilly,” she heard David say softly as she felt his grip relax. He was still holding her, but now it felt more like a hug than anything else. She buried her face in his chest, trying to shut out the world and come to terms with what had transpired. A moment later he let go of her entirely, whispering softly, “Please stay.”  
  
As he turned and walked back to the fire, Jill was full of indecision. She knew she should run, and yet she stood stock still trying to figure out what she really wanted. It did sound nice to sit at the fire, but she also wanted to run and hide for the rest of her life. With her chest still completely enveloped in her arms, she started backing slowly away.  
  
“Please stay,” she heard Ryan say in his friendliest tone. She knew he was roasting a marshmallow for her. She saw David unfold a chair and add it to the circle.  
  
“Bean, running off won’t change a thing. You’ll have to face us at breakfast in the morning,” said David. She knew he was right. This was humiliating, but… “You were obviously out here sneaking around in the dark, spying on us . . . in just your . . . those are panties, right?”  
  
Jill looked down at how she was dressed, ‘Oh my, God,’ she thought. ‘Caught sneaking around in just panties.’ She felt so ashamed. She turned to hide her face.  
  
She felt the need to run and hide, and yet she realized that she hadn’t. She was still there.  
  
“Your marshmallow is ready,” announced Ryan. Jill turned her head and glanced back at him. She shook her head, rapidly but by small amounts.  
  
“You don’t want it?” asked Ryan, extending the fork in her direction. Jill didn’t respond, so he popped it into his mouth.  
  
“Ryan,” complained David. “I think she wanted that. I know my sister; she’s just wrestling with her inner demons. Or maybe she wants a S’more. Make another.”  
  
As Jill continued to struggle with indecision, she watched David setting out graham crackers and squares of chocolate. Ryan started roasting another marshmallow.  
  
“Jill, relax . . . come enjoy the fire with us,” said David. “Aren’t you getting a little cold?”  
  
She turned her attention to the fire. The idea of sitting by it was enticing. She knew how good its warmth would feel, but mostly she wanted to turn back time and undo all that had happened.  
  
“I guess . . . for a minute,” she heard herself say. Had she really said that? Was she agreeing?  
  
David indicated a chair, but still her feet remained rooted to the ground. Her extreme level of embarrassment was making it impossible to commit to a decision. She couldn’t stay, and yet she hadn’t run off. She thought of the Jeep. She could leave that very night.  
  
“Take your time,” said David, putting a marshmallow on his own fork.  
  
Jill took a step toward the fire, but just one.  
  
“I’m so sorry, guys,” she said.  
  
“For what?” asked David. “Don’t be silly.”  
  
Still she hesitated.  
  
“Relax, Bean,” he added in a reassuring tone. “Everything’s all right. You’re fine. We’re fine. No harm done.”  
  
Jill let out a heavy sigh and then walked slowly to the chair David had set out for her, her arms still hugging her upper body tightly.  
  
“It’s ready,” said Ryan. “Just the marshmallow? Or a s’more?”  
  
“Um . . . I don’t know how I can eat it,” she said.  
  
“Umm . . . with your mouth,” said Ryan with a chuckle, extending the fork toward her. When she didn’t make a move to take the marshmallow, he continued, “Should I feed it to you?”  
  
Jill saw a friendly smile on his face but looked quickly away in embarrassment.  
  
“Can I borrow a towel?” she asked, looking at David.  
  
“If you’re cold, move a little closer to the fire,” he suggested.  
  
Studying his expression, she saw that he wasn’t going to give her a towel to wrap up in.  
  
“It’s okay,” she said, raising a shoulder and repositioning her right arm so that it kept her chest hidden, her forearm across one breast, her hand cupped over the other. With her left hand now free, she reached for the roasted marshmallow, removing it from Ryan’s fork.  
  
“Thanks,” she said softly, her eyes cast down.  
  
“How about a s’more next,” offered Ryan, returning to the bag on the table.  
  
Jill knew she didn’t need to respond. He was going to make it anyway.  
  
The marshmallow was good, and Jill found herself trying to focus on the familiar taste to take her mind off her humiliation. She took small bites to keep her mouth busy so that she wouldn’t have to say anything.  
  
“So, spying on us, eh?” asked David.  
  
Jill glanced over at him, a frown on her face.  
  
“What?” he asked.  
  
“Who pretended to go to Snow Lake so that he could spy on his sister?” she asked. “And who took unauthorized ‘spy’ photos of a certain topless girl from the riverbank?” she added, looking straight at Ryan.  
  
“Uh . . . touché,” said David, smiling and nodding his head.  
  
“That’s right!” she said. “When it comes to bad behavior, you two have got me beat by a mile.”  
  
“Maybe,” said David. “But just how many times have you headed out in nothing more than panties? How many times have you spied on us?”  
  
“First time,” said Jill quickly. It wasn’t exactly true, but she didn’t feel the need to incriminate herself. She looked over and saw the smile on David’s face. Did he know something? She realized he might have visited her tent the night she had returned nude and knocked it down because it had been zipped. She knew she’d only give herself away if she asked.  
  
“This one’s ready,” said Ryan. “A s’more this time, right?”  
  
“Sure,” said Jill, happy to have the subject changed.  
  
“Thanks,” she said a moment later as he handed it to her.  
  
“And here’s a napkin. You’re not going to try and eat that one handed, are you?” Ryan asked.  
  
“Fraid so,” she said, taking the s’more from him and adjusting the arm across her chest in an attempt to maximize coverage. Glancing down, she realized that one distinct advantage of small breasts was that she was largely able to keep them both pretty well hidden with one arm.  
  
Ryan didn’t move, and Jill felt his eyes staring down at her. Feeling uncomfortable, she pressed her knees together. She was suddenly conscious of just how little she had on down below.  
  
“What?” she demanded, glaring up at him.  
  
“Sit back down, Ryan,” instructed David. “Can’t you see you’re making her jittery?  
  
“Sorry,” said Ryan, putting another marshmallow on his fork and taking his seat. “You’re just so beautiful. I can’t believe you’re finally here.”  
  
Jill shook her head, thinking about all the campfires she had missed out on, and yet she was surprised at just how normal she felt. Her hand enveloping her left breast was picking up the fact that her heartrate was indeed elevated, and yet she was hardly the whimpering, panicking girl she had been the prior August when she had been fighting to keep them from seeing her chest.  
  
Although she was left-handed, it still proved very difficult to eat the s’more without both hands. One chunk and a few good-sized crumbs ended up on the ground after bouncing off of her legs, a splotch of chocolate remaining behind on one of her thighs.  
  
“Can you load up a marshmallow for me?” Jill asked while looking at David. “I’m ready to try.”  
  
“Everything’s on the table,” said David.  
  
Jill frowned at him, knowing that it couldn’t be done one-handed.  
  
“Fine,” she said sharply.  
  
She got up and went to the table. With her back to them, she went about putting a marshmallow on a fork. Her chest was no longer covered, but by keeping her elbows clamped to her sides she was able to ensure that no one got a peek, not even from the side. Her breasts were indeed bare in the night air, but there was only darkness in the direction she was facing.  
  
“You’ve got an ass to die for,” said Ryan. “And you’re such a tease.”  
  
Jill flushed at his comment. She hadn’t been thinking about how visible her butt might be in the firelight. Her focus had been entirely on her bare chest. Suddenly she realized that her panties had ridden up. Being very careful to keep her elbows in tight, she reached back with both hands and pulled the fabric out of her crack, trying to get as much coverage as possible out of the small black garment.  
  
“I thought you were more of a shoulders man,” she teased. She rotated just enough to be able to peer back at Ryan. When they made eye contact, she winked. ‘I can give back in full measure,’ she thought.  
  
That torso twist and her wink had required her to muster her courage, but she didn’t want them to know just how embarrassed she was feeling. She was bound and determined to be nobody’s victim.  
  
With her arm again firmly in place across her chest, she made her way back to her chair and went about trying to roast the marshmallow.  
  
“Do you really think you can do that successfully with just one hand?” asked David.  
  
“I can out roast the two of you with one arm tied behind my back,” she bragged, instantly regretting her choice of words.  
  
“There’s an idea!” remarked Ryan.  
  
“No!” objected Jill.  
  
“What do you say, David? I’ve got rope.”  
  
“I’ll leave.”  
  
She was glad to see Ryan relax back into his chair. It was good to realize that she did have some clout after all.  
  
After things had settled down a bit, David said, “Bean, I think you’re ready to drop the arm.”  
  
“Oh, you do, do you?”  
  
“You’ll just end up with regrets. Remember last year? Come on . . . be brave!” said David.  
  
Jill glanced down at the hand on her breast. “I can’t,” she replied meekly after a long delay.  
  
“I think you can, and I think you want to,” said David in his most reassuring tone.  
  
“I want you to,” interjected Ryan.  
  
“I think she knows that,” said David with a snicker.  
  
“You’ve got gorgeous titties,” added Ryan. “I’ve already seen them, remember?”  
  
Jill looked away. Even if she might be willing to try baring her chest, she didn’t want them to know. It had been a mistake to share that thought with David over the winter. Above all, she couldn’t let them win.  
  
She shook her head.  
  
“You won’t regret it,” said David. “What you will regret is not taking this opportunity. Carpe diem!”  
  
For some reasons, that struck a chord with her. She suspected that he might be right.  
  
“Maybe if you closed your eyes,” she suggested quietly.  
  
Looking over she saw the smile on Ryan’s face broaden.  
  
“I’ve got a better idea,” said David. “Why don’t you close YOUR eyes?”  
  
“What purpose would that serve?” she asked.  
  
“Just try it,” urged David.  
  
Jill took a deep breath, but begrudgingly closed her eyes. She tried to relax. As strange as it seemed, she was starting to realize that she did want this. Maybe the conditions weren’t ideal, but she did feel safe.

**Chapter 23: The Campfire, continued**  
  
She opened her eyes again and stared unblinkingly at Ryan. “No photos, right?”  
  
“I don’t even have my camera,” he said, holding up his hands to show that they were empty.  
  
Jill glanced over at David.  
  
“Right, no photos,” said David. “What happens at the lake, stays at the lake.” After a moment he continued, “Okay . . . again . . . close your eyes.”  
  
Jill knew what she wanted to do, but she wasn’t sure she could. Again she closed her eyes and tried to relax. After the longest pause, and several deep breaths, she felt her right hand sliding down her breast. She hesitated briefly at the point where she felt that her nipple was about to be uncovered, but taking a breath to again focus on relaxing, her hand continued down.  
  
She knew the boys were watching intently as her left breast was uncovered. She boldly let her right arm fall all the way down to her lap.  
  
Jill heard a sharp intake of breath from Ryan. Keeping her eyes cinched closed, she fought the urge to return her arm to her chest. She was trembling, but she focused on maintaining posture. It was such a foreign concept to her, but she wanted so badly to be able to feel proud of her chest. She’d never thought that she might feel that way – unless her boobs miraculously grew a cup size or two.  
  
“You’re absolutely gorgeous, said David. “… a work of art.”  
  
“F\*\*king awesome tits!” interjected Ryan.  
  
“Ryan!” said David reproachfully.  
  
“Well . . . she does! I mean, they are!” he replied. “… f\*\*king amazing.”  
  
“Girls don’t want to hear guys thoughts . . . unfiltered like that,” said David.  
  
“Who says we don’t?” said Jill meekly, almost laughing. “…but, my God is this ever embarrassing,” she added as a shudder shook her body. She brought both hands up to cover her face. As her elbows were in close, she had inadvertently covered the sides of her breasts. Realizing that, she lifted her elbows up and out. Knowing that her face had to be bright red, she opted to keep it covered.  
  
“Like I said . . . you’re a f\*\*king supermodel!” said Ryan, his glee more than evident.  
  
Jill thought about taking down her hands. She wanted to at least peek, but suddenly she realized that baring her face and looking at Ryan was going to be just as challenging as baring her chest had been.  
  
Silence lingered, causing Jill to peek out between two fingers. As she had expected, Ryan’s eyes were wide. He was staring unashamedly at her chest.  
  
Realizing that Jill was looking, David announced, “No drooling Ryan.”  
  
Jill cracked up, noticing that Ryan did look as if he were about to drool, his mouth hanging open.  
  
“Shut up!” insisted Ryan.  
  
“You’re hilarious,” said David.  
  
“Give me a break. It’s not every day that I get to see tits,” said Ryan.  
  
“Well, play your cards right, and it might be.”  
  
Jill was taken aback by that comment. Again she fought the urge to cover up. “Just hold your horses. I haven’t agreed to anything.”  
  
“But you will!” replied Ryan. “My God, you’ve got great tits!”  
  
“Stop saying that,” she said continuing to blush.  
  
“Awesome nipples too!” added Ryan.  
  
“Stop! Just stop!” she insisted.  
  
“You don’t really want me to stop.”  
  
Jill didn’t reply.  
  
“And I so love the little panties!” he added.  
  
In horror Jill realized that her knees had drifted apart; she’d been so focused on the fact that her chest was bare. In the blink of an eye, she covered her panties with her hands as her knees banged together. Her sudden movement caused her nipples to snap and then bobble briefly on her chest.  
  
“Sorry. Couldn’t resist!” said Ryan, laughing jubilantly. “Look at you blush!”  
  
“Don’t overdo it,” said David. “We need to help her feel comfortable, remember?”  
  
“How am I ever supposed to feel comfortable around you two?” she asked. “… without my top?”  
  
“Well, we don’t want you to feel completely comfortable. It’s more fun like this,” said Ryan.  
  
“And just what am I supposed to get out of this?” she asked indignantly.  
  
“Relax and get yourself another marshmallow,” offered David.  
  
Looking down, Jill saw the marshmallow she had been roasting lying in the dirt.  
  
“Oops,” she said, picking it up and tossing it in the fire.  
  
When she was again at the table for a new marshmallow, she again heard, “Ass to die for!”  
  
“Pocket, make him stop!”  
  
She definitely wanted to appear as if she disliked being talked about in that way, even if it was making her tingle. Never before had she been treated like that, and never before had she felt so sexy and so humiliated at the same time. It was an intoxicating combination.  
  
She returned to the fire, intending to roast her very best marshmallow – using both hands. Leaning forward with her arms extended down toward the fire, she was conscious that her breasts would be largely hidden from the boys’ positions. They didn’t seem to mind, and the glowing warmth of the fire felt luscious on her bare skin.  
  
Over the course of the next hour, Jill started to feel remarkably comfortable, dressed in just the one tiny piece of clothing. They talked and joked about all kinds of things, and mentions of her ‘gorgeous little titties’ (as Ryan was calling them) became less frequent.  
  
At one point Ryan tried to talk her into shimmying. She refused, saying, “Dream on Bucko!” But even though she had done her best to act insulted, his interest in seeing her do that had been flattering. At one time there hadn’t been anything to shake, but that was no longer the case. Since becoming an A-cup girl, there was now enough that she could feel it flapping around when she shimmied. Ryan’s various comments, even though they were brazen, and the look in his eyes were making her feel much better about her small breasts.  
  
When the fire had died down and they had decided that it was finally bedtime, David offered to walk her back to her tent.  
  
“I’d like to come along,” said Ryan.  
  
“I think it would be best if you stayed here,” said David. “Jill and I need to discuss when we will be helping her move out to the point . . . tomorrow.”  
  
“Now, wait just a minute,” she said, realizing that moving her tent would be tantamount to full agreement to their terms.  
  
“Okay. I’ll stay here so you guys can get that figured out,” agreed Ryan.  
  
“Okay, Jillybean . . . maybe late afternoon,” suggested David once they were part way along the trail. They were going along slowly as Jill was barefoot. “… give you a little time to prepare . . . mentally.”  
  
“I just can’t.”  
  
“We’ve all learned this evening that you can,” he countered. “When have you ever had that much fun at a campfire?”  
  
Was that true? Had she been having fun? Somehow being topless had kept her on pins and needles the entire time, excitedly anxious. But fun?  
  
“I won’t be able to take my top off again, especially not in the daytime,” she said.  
  
“And yet you will! You can and you will.”  
  
“But I’m much too self-conscious . . . you know that.”  
  
“If you’re so self-conscious, then why did you come to our camp topless this evening? Nobody forced you to.”  
  
Jill didn’t want to admit the truth – that she had been able to survive being topless in their presence because she had been feeling aroused. Coming to it cold in the light of day – that aspect would be completely absent.  
  
“I’m still self-conscious. Nothing’s changed.”  
  
“On the contrary . . . everything’s changed,” he replied jovially. “We’ll move your tent out late afternoon. We’ll have dinner, another campfire. You can keep your shirt on until the next day, until mid-morning. Then when it warms up, Ryan and I will take off our shirts like we always do. As ‘one of the guys,’ you’ll follow suit. If we moved you out in the morning, then you’d have to go topless right away. Moving later in the day will make for a more comfortable transition.”  
  
“I’m not one of the guys.”  
  
“Jilly, Jilly, Jilly! Play along! You’re ready!”  
  
They continued to talk the rest of the way, but the last thing that David said before they parted was, “Okay, we’ll both come and help you move tomorrow, say four-ish?”  
  
Jill started to again object, but instead, she found herself just nodding. As David turned to walk back, she took a deep breath, realizing that she had probably just agreed to spend much of the remainder of the summer topless.  
  
She was a little surprised to find her tent unzipped, but then she remembered leaving it that way.  
  
Once in her bag, she noticed that her heart was pounding. ‘Oh, my God! What have I done?’ she thought, replaying the evening in her mind. The instant that the flashlight had lit up the forest . . . that had been terrifying; she’d nearly had a heart attack. She couldn’t believe that she had not bolted. And yet she had . . . straight into David.  
  
Had she really just spent almost two hours hanging out with the boys in just her panties? She ran her hands down over them. They were so small. She felt how narrow they were between the legs. In horror, she realized that the crotch was damp. ‘Thank God for campfire smoke,’ she thought, realizing that it and it alone might have been what had kept the boys from noticing her feminine aroma. But maybe they had just decided not to say anything. She tried to block that thought out of her head, preferring to believe that the smoke had kept them from noticing.  
  
‘What if I become aroused during the day?’ she thought. Then there would not be the fire to mask the scent. Cursing her female body and its animalistic response to excitement, she eventually fell into a troubled sleep, not knowing what to do about how she had seemingly agreed to their terms.  
  
Within a few seconds of waking up, Jill lapsed into shock as the memory of what she had apparently agreed to the night before returned.  
  
At breakfast, she was mostly able to keep from thinking about it as the boys were in such high spirits and so talkative. David told their grandparents about Jill’s impending move out to the point. To her surprise, Ryan and David even talked about how much fun the three of them had had at the campfire the night before. Ryan behaved and avoided mentioning how she had been spying as well as anything about her ‘gorgeous little titties’ being on display; although, the amount of innuendo made her think that he was on the verge of slipping up.  
  
Seeing the delight in her grandmother’s eyes kept her from contradicting anything that was said. It was nice that her grandmother was happy, but she knew that she’d feel quite differently about the situation if she knew the full truth.  
  
As they were splitting up to go their separate ways after breakfast, David remarked, “See you around four then.”  
  
“I guess,” Jill heard herself say.  
  
‘What in the hell am I doing?’ she said to herself after they had gone. She needed to think. Things were moving too fast. And they certainly didn’t deserve it, if she were to follow through with her commitment. But in the back of her mind, she knew that if she did allow this to happen, she would be doing it for herself. If anything, she was bound and determined that she wasn’t going to be a victim. She was going to be in charge, and she would only be topless if it was truly what she wanted – not that she’d let them know that. She’d have to do her best to keep that a secret.  
  
Hoping that some exercise might clear her mind, she packed a lunch and her book and headed for Cornice Ridge. As she had gotten such an early start, it was too early for lunch when she reached the ridge. She didn’t know how far up the trail she’d go, but she went left at the fork and headed towards Snow Lake.  
  
Walking along and thinking, she couldn’t believe that she had apparently gone from ‘never’ to ‘okay’ in something like two and a half weeks. Largely she was still at ‘never’; however, she knew that when the boys came to help her move her tent that she’d be there.  
  
To her surprise, she made it all the way to Snow Lake before stopping for lunch. Concluding that she needed a bit of a test run to see what it might be like to be topless and active during the day, she took off her top after scanning carefully for other hikers. She had made a point of not putting on a bra that morning. Taking off her top was as scary as ever, but once she had done so, she tried to distract herself by doing something normal, looking around for a place to eat lunch.  
  
Snow Lake was above the tree line and the air was crisp. Looking down she saw that her nipples had extended out to maximum length. She found herself thinking about how that made little sense. If it was cold, shouldn’t they retract back in – to minimize surface area?  
  
As was her habit, she found herself constantly scanning her surroundings in all directions. If there were there other hikers in the area, she absolutely had to see them before they saw her.  
  
She thought that she should be more relaxed than she had been the first time that she had gone topless, but she really wasn’t . . . at least not by much. What was different was that she was committed to finding out if she might be able to be topless for long periods of time, were she to follow through and actually move out to the point.  
  
In that spirit, she decided to hike all the way around Snow Lake topless after finishing her lunch. Just the idea of doing that gave her the jitters for it was her plan to leave everything at her lunch spot, top included. She would not have anything with her that she might be able to put on – if she followed through.  
  
Snow Lake was a good-sized glacial lake, a bit more than a mile in circumference by her estimate. Her father had once explained to her that it was a type of glacial lake known as a tarn. Due to the altitude, there was always snow there well into the summer. That’s why her family had started calling it ‘Snow Lake.’ She had no idea what its real name might be.  
  
She knew that she’d feel really exposed hiking all the way around the lake while topless. But that was the point. She’d decided that if she couldn’t do that, that she had to drop all thoughts of moving out to the point.  
  
She hid her things in among the rocks and started heading around the shoreline to the left. Given the altitude, she knew the water would be freezing cold; she didn’t need to go to the trouble of feeling it. Much of the shoreline had some soil and a little vegetation, but from experience, she knew that the ground at the far end of the lake was mostly rocky with very little of either.  
  
She did her best to be brave, walking boldly away from her clothing, but she didn’t know who she was fooling. In reality, it was beyond scary. She wore just her hiking boots and a pair of shorts over her panties, nothing more. With every step she took, she felt her nervousness increase. In some ways it was quite a bit like floating the outlet topless; however, that time her bikini top had been tied at her waist. Now her shirt was getting farther and farther away by the moment.

**Chapter 24: Alone to Snow Lake**  
  
As she continued to walk, she realized just how foolhardy what she was doing was. If any other hikers came to Snow Lake that afternoon, they would most likely appear right where she had eaten her lunch . . . where her stuff was hidden. They would probably end up between her and her shirt!  
  
She tried to think about what she might do if that were to happen. She could wait them out – hide. They’d have to leave, eventually. Alternatively, she might try for home without her stuff – via an alternate route. That idea, walking all the way back topless, was too scary to think about. Even if worse came to worse, she couldn’t picture herself deciding to do that.  
  
As she continued on around, she did her best to try and keep her thoughts positive so that she might enjoy herself. It was a nice day, and she liked the feel of the sun on her skin. Earlier at lunch, she had applied sunscreen carefully, especially to her nipples. As she had done so, she had found herself thinking about Ryan’s present, the bottle of sunscreen lotion. It had been considerate of him to give thought to that, she realized – even if the context had been his efforts to coerce her into toplessness.  
  
As she approached the steeper section of shoreline at the other end of the lake, she studied the terrain above. She and David had always talked about one day climbing up to the ridge, and yet they had never attempted it, not that it would be particularly difficult. It was the climb that David and Ryan had said they were planning to undertake the day she had floated the outlet. That ridge had been their ruse, and a believable one at that.  
  
Thinking about the ridge took her mind off the fact that she was topless, at least to the extent that it might be possible. She started to think that it would be a minor coup to conquer the ridge all by herself. She could name it, ‘Jill’s Ridge,’ or whatever she wanted. Being the first there would represent a lasting victory over her brother. She had always thought that one day they’d do it together, but he had been the one who had announced that he was going to do it without her. The more she thought about it, the more she felt that it had to be. He had decided to tackle it without her, so it would be completely fitting if she were to conquer it first.  
  
Taking a quick break, she studied the wall of rocks and boulders ahead, looking for the best route up. In general, it didn’t look as if it mattered. It looked to be a fairly homogenous rocky slope.  
  
She angled away from the lake and began to climb. To a large extent, it was like going up a long stairway two or three steps at a time because the rocks were so large. Other sections consisted primarily of smaller loose rock. Those were more difficult to negotiate.  
  
At one point, she started a small landslide. It did not make it down to the lake; however, a bit farther on she dislodged a bowling ball sized rock that bounced down the slope and disappeared into the lake with a splash. While that was impressive, it reminded her that she shouldn’t be doing what she was doing, making that climb alone. To make matters worse, she had not told anyone where she was going and she had no cell reception. Were a fall to result in a serious injury, she would be in a bad way. She might eventually be located, but possibly not for a few days.  
  
Halfway up, she stopped to take in the view. It was impressive, but what struck her was how far she had come from where her shirt was hidden. It was much scarier than any of her previous expeditions – being that far from her shirt in the light of day – and yet it was similarly exhilarating. Just like the guys often did, she was hiking in nothing more than a pair of shorts.  
  
Stopping and allowing herself to think about it, while looking back towards where her things were hidden, made her want to hurry back . . . and yet she also felt a strong urge to go on.  
  
About fifteen minutes later she reached the ridge, realizing that it was, in essence, a pass. Down below stretched another glacial valley, extending in the direction of Agency which she could see in the distance. The view in that direction was quite similar to the view from Cornice Ridge. In the other direction lay Cache Lake, completely hidden from view by the terrain.  
  
She checked her phone and confirmed what she had expected, no reception.  
  
Feeling elated, Jill lifted her arms over her head and let out a celebratory yell at the top of her lungs. She turned as she did so, purposefully pointing her nipple capped breasts toward all four points of the compass.  
  
Triumphant feelings of success surged through her. She felt both happy and proud. She’d reached a spot on the mountain that neither David nor Ryan had ever been to, and she’d done it with her tits out! How great was that?! An Image of Tarzan popped into her head. He ruled the jungle in nothing more than a loincloth. Mindful of being somewhat similarly dressed, Jill posed erect, facing Agency. She gave her best Tarzan yell, pounding her chest – the fleshy part well above her nipples – just as she’d seen Tarzan do on the big screen. The sound reverberated inside her chest with each impact of a fist. She poured her heart into the effort and then paused, holding her breath, as she listened for the echo. It never came.  
  
Realizing that she ought to have proof of her accomplishment, she took a photo of the view down upon Snow Lake. Turning around she took a picture of Agency from that Vantage point as well. For good measure, she decided to take a few selfies, also facing both directions. After a little consideration, she framed her photos such that her bare torso would show prominently. It should be fine, she reasoned; her cell phone was password protected. Besides, she could crop them later, should she want to share or post one of the selfies.  
  
After taking another minute to enjoy the view, Jill started down. As expected, the climb down was more difficult than the climb up. Reminding herself that a fall would be bad, she took her time. The last thing she wanted to do was to start a rockslide. Once back at the shoreline, she continued on around the lake rather than retracing her steps.  
  
She found her backpack with little difficulty and took a big drink from her water bottle. In order to travel light, she had not taken it with her on her topless excursion.  
  
Checking the time, she saw that she was still ahead of schedule. She decided to hang out there for a while before continuing down. In order to be able to relax and to avoid getting a sunburn, she put her shirt back on. She then pulled out her new book, Democracy in America. She hoped that it would be interesting, but she had a hard time seeing how it might be very relevant given that it was based on a trip that Alexis de Tocqueville had taken in 1831.  
  
After reading for about an hour, she packed up and headed for home. To her surprise, she passed a couple on the trail just before reaching the Elk Meadows cutoff. She said ‘Hi’ but kept right on going. Lucky they got a late start, she found herself thinking. A couple of hours earlier and they might have surprised a topless girl up at Snow Lake. It served as a reminder for Jill; there were not a lot of people around Cache Lake, but there were certainly a few.  
  
As she continued on down, she thought about how she still did not know what to do regarding moving out to the point. Doing so would be tantamount to accepting the boys’ terms. She could still not fathom doing that, and yet she had passed the test she had just given herself with flying colors. However, it had been under conditions that she had control over – she had been alone. If she agreed to the ‘one of the guys’ terms, neither condition would exist, as she understood things. She wouldn’t be alone and the boys would control when she was topless.  
  
While she was still convinced that she could not agree, her feet were taking her back so that she would be there when the boys came to help her move her tent.  
  
She couldn’t rationalize what was happening, but she knew she was taking the path of least resistance. The best explanation that she could come up with for what she now knew would happen was that she had grown weary of being strong and independent. She longed for things to be easy. She wanted to relax and have fun. The topless campfire had been fun – a lot of fun, in fact!  
  
And yet she was fully conscious of the irony of taking the path of least resistance. At the moment it might seem easy; however, she knew that the opposite would end up being the case. It was going to be far from easy. Tomorrow would indeed come, and she’d have to…  
  
She did her best to not think about that.  
  
But the boys had won. She was ready to admit that. Her ‘wait them out’ strategy had been a failure. She was ready to give up on that and let them win. For some reason, she was ready to find out what that might be like. It was scary – beyond scary actually, but for some reason, she felt like admitting defeat and giving it a try. She expected that she might hate it, but just maybe she would end up enjoying it as well. It was the big unknown, and she felt as if she was ready to let the slippery slope take her there.  
  
Since she had decided to stop fighting, when she got back to her tent she went about gathering her things together. ‘No use worrying about it now. It’s happening, so embrace your future, Jill Wahlund,’ she told herself as she rolled up her sleeping bag.  
  
Shortly thereafter, the boys were there. A few knowing smiles, but very few words were exchanged as they started pulling tent stakes.  
  
To Jill’s surprise, even her grandparents made an appearance. They no longer moved very quickly, so they weren’t really there to help; however, her grandfather did manage a token contribution. He picked up the tent stakes that were scattered about. They mostly just seemed to be there to enjoy being part of the occasion. It was obviously a development that they had been looking forward to for a long time.  
  
Jill knew they wouldn’t accompany them out to the point. As a matter of fact, she wasn’t even aware that they had been to the lake at all that summer. They were living independently and enjoying themselves, but their world had shrunken to the point that it consisted of little more than the trailer, its immediate environs, and an occasional trip to the grocery store.  
  
Still working at blocking thoughts of the next day out of her head, Jill walked out to the point with the boys. They were trying so hard to be helpful that there hadn’t even been anything for her to carry. ‘What strong, helpful, ill-mannered boys,’ she thought to herself as the three of them walked the well-traveled path through the forest in silence.  
  
David and Ryan’s attentiveness seemed to know no bounds as they went about setting up Jill’s tent exactly how and where she instructed. Jill felt as if she were being treated like a princess, but she knew exactly why they were behaving as they were. She WAS the guest of honor . . . and she would be paying dearly for the privilege.  
  
She did her best to go with the flow, accepting the seat that Ryan offered and sipping on the cold lemonade that David had opened for her. She relaxed and did her best to enjoy herself while the boys finished setting up her tent and then switched their efforts over to making a fire in preparation for dinner.  
  
The subject of what they had done during the day came up, and Jill bragged about climbing to the top of the ridge at the far end of Snow Lake. They all knew that it was not a particularly difficult climb, just one that they had never undertaken, in large part due to how far it was from their home base on the lake.  
  
Jill pulled out her phone to show them her photographic proof, which wasn’t really necessary as they believed her. She let them look at the various scenery photos taken from the ridge while maintaining a tight grip on her phone. Probably sensing that there was a reason she was holding on to her phone so tightly, Ryan yanked it from her hands, sprinting away.  
  
“Damn you, Ryan! Give me that!” she yelled, in hot pursuit. In spite of her efforts, he managed to keep one step ahead of her, even managing to flip through her photos at the same time.  
  
“Holy shit!” he exclaimed. “You’ve got to see these, David.”  
  
In horror, she realized that he was looking at her selfies taken above Snow Lake. “Ryan, that’s mean. You don’t have my permission!” said Jill, quite flustered.  
  
“Chill!” he said, putting the phone behind his back to keep it out of her reach. “Where’s the harm? I’m just looking.”  
  
Jill tried to slap him, but he was quick and she caught only air.  
  
“It’s not like I haven’t seen the gorgeous little titties . . . and will be seeing them again . . . and again . . . and again!” he said with a triumphant laugh, still managing to stay one step ahead.  
  
Jill flushed bright red at his comments. “Give it to me! David, help!” she pleaded, trying her best to get to her phone.  
  
“Check out the topless selfies!” said Ryan, handing the phone to David as he slipped quickly past, Jill still in hot pursuit.  
  
“You guys are so mean,” she said with a sigh of resignation. “Go ahead and look . . . I guess . . . but when you’re done, I’ll have to delete them.”  
  
“You don’t have to do that,” said David, studying the images.  
  
“Yeah,” agreed Ryan. “That would be a shame. They’re great photos. Can I have copies?”  
  
“You just don’t get it, do you?” said Jill reproachfully.  
  
“No, YOU don’t get it!” he countered. “Tits like yours are a valuable resource. Keeping them hidden . . . it just shouldn’t be allowed. In fact, it should be a crime.”  
  
“Why am I not surprised to hear you say that? But they’re my tits, right? Girls don’t have rights?”  
  
“Guys don’t have rights?” he replied.  
  
“Not to my tits!” said Jill, shaking her head in exasperation.  
  
“Jilly,” said David to get her attention. “Pardon me for studying your chest in such detail, but your boobies look a little red. Did you forget to apply sunscreen?”  
  
“Let me see,” she said.  
  
David held the phone so that she could see the image. It was zoomed in such that her chest filled the screen.  
  
“I wanna see!” said Ryan, crowding close. Jill took the opportunity to elbow him in the gut, but he remained unfazed.  
  
“Oh, that’s not sunburn,” she said. “That’s just where I was pounding on ‘em.”  
  
“You were pounding on your titties?” asked Ryan in disbelief.  
  
“Well . . . above. Up here actually,” said Jill, placing a hand on her upper chest and sliding it from side to side.  
  
“Umm . . . sounds fun,” said Ryan, his voice full of curiosity. “Do girls…”  
  
“Shush!” said Jill interrupting him. “I was just doing a Tarzan imitation.”  
  
“Well, that explains everything,” laughed David.  
  
Jill shook her head in contempt as David handed her the phone back.  
  
Deciding to think about deleting the photos later, Jill quickly stuffed it into a pocket. After all, it was password protected. Next time she’d have to do a better job of holding onto it after entering the password.

**Chapter 25: Another Campfire**  
  
Jill was still bright red from embarrassment. She hadn’t intended those photos to be seen. However, she knew that what Ryan had said was indeed true. She was still struggling with the course things had taken . . . but he had seen her boobs and was destined to be seeing a lot more of them.  
  
“Even if you guys are getting your way, you can still be nice to me,” she said, sticking out her lower lip. “Looking through someone else’s pictures is not cool!”  
  
“Ah, Jill, don’t pout,” said Ryan. “I was just having fun. We’re going to have a lot of fun . . . now!”  
  
“But why does it have to be at my expense?” she asked.  
  
“At your expense?” he replied. “Look at you, Tarzan! Topless selfies! Floating the outlet topless! Running around naked and spying on us!”  
  
“I wasn’t naked,” insisted Jill.  
  
“Nearly!” said Ryan laughing merrily. “I’m starting to think you’re a nudist. Three times now you’ve been topless, and those are just the times we know about.”  
  
“Girls tan topless,” said Jill. “I refuse to be embarrassed about that. Lots of girls do it.”  
  
“Well, that might be an explanation for two of the times, but spying on us? That was at night! You’re going to have to try a little harder, Jill.”  
  
Jill opened her mouth to speak but no sound came out. He had her there. She didn’t know what to say. “You’ll see,” she said finally. “My proof is in my tan lines . . . my lack of tan lines.”  
  
“That still doesn’t explain why you were wandering around naked at night,” said Ryan.  
  
“I wasn’t naked!” she repeated.  
  
“Come on, you two,” said David. “That’s enough! Let’s make this a summer to remember! And let’s start right now. Jill . . . how about a hot dog?”  
  
“Thanks, Pocket,” she said. “I don’t want to argue. This is hard for me. I can’t believe that I’m going to do this, but I guess I . . . I’m . . . I’m . . . in over my head. Just tell your friend here not to make it any harder than it already is.”  
  
“Hear that, Ryan,” said David. “The lady has a request. It sounds very reasonable to me.”  
  
“It does,” said Ryan. “I’m sorry. I’ll try to be on my best behavior.”  
  
Jill put a hot dog on her roasting fork and went to the fire. This is what she had been missing. It seemed like a small thing, but for her it was the essence of camping. And yet while she enjoyed it, she wondered how it could be worth it. How could anything be worth all the humiliation that she had endured, and especially all that lay ahead?  
  
She didn’t know the answer to that question, but she pushed those thoughts aside, deciding to do her best to relax and live in the moment.  
  
Much later, after they had finished dinner and were roasting marshmallows, Jill asked, “Okay, guys, I guess I need a few things clarified. Like . . . how exactly is this supposed to work? We go to breakfast. We come back…”  
  
“Exactly,” said David. “And depending on how warm it is, Ryan and I will most likely take our shirts off. It’s a guy thing. And if we do, then it’s your turn. Simple, right?”  
  
“Easy for you to say,” said Jill. “And then what?”  
  
“And then we do whatever we want,” said Ryan.  
  
“I don’t think so!” said Jill adamantly. “Not whatever YOU want, Ryan. No touching, right?”  
  
“Absolutely no touching,” said David resolutely.  
  
“I want that to be a rule,” said Jill. “I feel vulnerable topless.”  
  
“I’m sure you do,” said David. “But it’s already a rule. Ryan and I have talked about this, haven’t we?”  
  
“Yes,” said Ryan begrudgingly.  
  
“As we both know, Ryan has the hots for you, Jill. There’s nothing wrong with that. You’d be quite a catch for the likes of him…”  
  
“Hey!” interrupted Ryan.  
  
“No offense intended. I told him that he should just ask you out, but he doesn’t want to.”  
  
“She wouldn’t go out with me.”  
  
“How do you know?” asked David.  
  
“I know,” said Ryan dejectedly.  
  
“I’m not going out with him,” asserted Jill. “He and I can be friends . . . maybe . . . but other than that, he’s not my type.”  
  
“See, David . . . I’m not her type.”  
  
“Hey,” said Jill. “Don’t let it get to you. I get to have my own criteria. Nothing says that I have to be attracted to guys just because they have the hots for me.”  
  
“Certainly not,” agreed David.  
  
“I’m just not a cupcake boy like Tyler,” said Ryan.  
  
“Hey, leave Tyler out of this!” she complained. She hated that Ryan referred to him as a cupcake boy. She didn’t know what he meant by the term, but she knew it was a put-down.  
  
“I thought you were done with him,” said Ryan.  
  
“I am,” said Jill. “But that’s not what we’re talking about. We’re talking about touching, and I want it to be clear. I know how guys...”  
  
“There’s an ironclad no touching rule. Right, Ryan?” asked David.  
  
“We’re all in agreement,” said Ryan. “But not anywhere?” he asked, reaching over to where she sat next to him and placing a hand gently on her knee.  
  
“Jill?” asked David.  
  
“Touching is okay,” said Jill. “If it’s friendly, like that. Just not private areas.”  
  
“So, bikini areas?” asked David.  
  
“Right. Duh!” agreed Jill.  
  
“Okay, more clarifications?” asked David.  
  
“I don’t want other people to see me,” said Jill.  
  
“We can be careful, but there are no guarantees,” said David. “Think about this realistically.”  
  
“I am, and I don’t want other people to see me,” she repeated.  
  
“Fortunately this is Cache Lake, but a minute ago, Ryan said, ‘we do whatever we want.’ That’s because we’re planning to do what we always do: hike, climb, swim,” said David. Seeing a look of concern on her face, he continued, “You’re just now realizing this?”  
  
“Well…” said Jill.  
  
“We didn’t embark on this plan to transform you into ‘one of the guys’ so that we could hang out in camp,” said David.  
  
“I’m a little worried,” said Jill fidgeting. She knew that was a huge understatement.  
  
“It will be fine,” said David. “Tomorrow we are going hiking. I don’t have to remind you how you’ll be dressed except to say that the weather forecast looks ideal for the three amigos.”  
  
Jill was biting her lower lip and she knew her eyes had that worried look to them. She couldn’t help it.  
  
“Oh, come on, Jill. Lighten up!” continued David. “Tomorrow we can go to Chokecherry Ridge.”  
  
“That might be okay,” she said, brightening up a bit. “I’ve never run into anyone on that trail.”  
  
“Me neither,” said David. “There’s hardly a trail. Almost no foot traffic,”  
  
“Yeah,” agreed Jill. “The hike I took at Snow Lake . . . that was surely riskier. I can’t believe I did that.”  
  
“At least you took photos,” said Ryan with a wink. “I’d still like copies!”  
  
“You never give up, do you?” said Jill.  
  
Ryan shrugged. “I do. Just sayin’.”  
  
“We are planning to keep you safe,” said David. “It’s only fun if nothing bad happens. That means really bad things like rape, but also avoiding the sort of exposure that would be difficult to recover from. But we’ll have to be careful. As you know, we aren’t the only people at the lake. There are all kinds of people over there,” he said, pointing at the cabins on the distant shore.  
  
“A lot of those people are elderly,” said Ryan.  
  
“But some of them are our age,” added David.  
  
“I just don’t want other people to see me,” repeated Jill. “That’s all.”  
  
“Come here for a minute,” said David, standing up. He took her hand and led her away from the fire circle. “See this tree?” She nodded. “This is the tree you were hiding behind. Look how close it is to the fire. Now tell me again that you don’t want to be seen.”  
  
Jill bit her lower lip and looked down at the ground.  
  
She heard Ryan chuckling. Looking up she saw the smile on David’s face.  
  
“What?” she asked.  
  
“You’re just not that convincing. That’s all,” said David. “One possible explanation is that you wanted to be seen. Subconsciously, maybe?”  
  
Jill shook her head. “It just happened,” she said meekly.  
  
“We’ll be careful, Bean,” he said. “Remember, ‘What happens at the lake, stays at the lake.’ We’ll make that our motto. Sound good?”  
  
Jill didn’t reply, but she decided that she was somewhat pleased with the responses. She had a firm ‘no-touching’ agreement, and she even felt good about their commitment to keeping her safe. There was risk involved; after all, she would be topless. However, she had been taking some significant chances on her own. At least now she would have David and Ryan with her. Being with them might be safer than being alone.  
  
Hours later she entered her tent, zipping the fly behind her. She stripped down to just her panties and crawled into her bag.  
  
“Goodnight, Jill,” she heard both boys say from their tent, one after the other.  
  
“Goodnight,” she replied.  
  
“Looking forward to being one of the guys?” asked David.  
  
“Umm . . . not really,” she replied. She wanted to object once again to the idea that she could be, ‘one of the guys,’ but that seemed to be among the arguments that she was losing.  
  
She heard laughter from the other tent. She wanted to ask what was so funny, but she didn’t. She had a pretty good idea.  
  
That night she did manage to get some sleep, but she also experienced long periods during which her overly active mind kept her awake. For the life of her, she could not figure out how it had come to this. Had she really capitulated so completely? Was she really going to roam the forest topless with David and Ryan? As the first light of the approaching dawn made it so that she could see things inside her tent, she sat up and dressed.  
  
Deciding that she couldn’t go through with it, she repacked her bag. Doing her best to make no noise, she unzipped her tent, placing all her stuff on the ground outside. As quietly as she could manage, she made a quick trip with most of her belongings. Returning a few minutes later, she started pulling tent stakes.  
  
She hadn’t gotten far when she noticed movement inside the boys’ tent. As David emerged, she froze. They both stood stock still, staring at each other in the dim light. Jill didn’t know what to do.  
  
David approached her, but she set her chin and stood her ground. Touching her upper arm tenderly he asked, “Really?”  
  
She turned her face and looked up into his eyes, nodding. “Please, don’t try to stop me.” She felt tears forming in her eyes, and knew that he would see.  
  
To her surprise, he pulled her close and gave her a reassuring hug. “It’s okay,” he said. “I understand.”  
  
He held her for upwards of a minute. It was the nicest hug that Jill had experienced in a long time. She’d felt so alone, emotionally. David broke off the hug. To her surprise, he went and started pulling the remaining tent stakes. With the two of them working together, they had the tent down and rolled up in no time.  
  
Jill picked it up and headed back toward the Airstream trailer. David walked along with her for some distance. After they were far enough away to keep from waking Ryan, he reached for her arm, stopping her.  
  
“It’s too early for me. I’m going back to bed,” he said quietly. “But just so you know, I never meant for it to be like this. Given what you said last winter, I thought that you’d agree relatively quickly and the fun would ensue. I didn’t anticipate all the stress. I’m so sorry.”  
  
Jill let him hug her again. It was nice having a twin brother. Even though he was a teen boy, he seemed to be there for her when she needed him the most. A moment later, he headed back in the direction of the point. Jill didn’t know what to say. She just stood there and watched him go.  
  
Back at the trailer, she deposited the tent on top of her pile. Wanting to be alone and not wanting to wake her grandparents, she headed down the driveway. She’d already considered everything from every angle, but she did so yet again as she turned and walked in the direction of the bridge.  
  
“So, what went wrong this time, pray tell?” asked her grandmother later that morning at breakfast. “Oh, I know you’re not going to tell me. I just have to say how disappointed I am. Everything seemed to be moving in such a lovely direction . . . finally.”  
  
Jill stared blankly at her plate.  
  
“At least answer me this,” continued her grandmother. “Did you leave or did the boys kick you out?”  
  
“I left,” said Jill quietly, deciding that her grandmother deserved a little honestly.  
  
She heard her grandmother let out a big sigh, but then for the longest time they ate in silence.

**Chapter 26: Grandma Weighs In**  
  
As they were finishing their breakfast, her grandmother again started telling them that she didn’t understand why they made things so difficult for themselves. She told them how easy and carefree life had been when she was their age. “We were actually able to talk to each other face-to-face,” she said. “But I guess that was because we didn’t have cell phones, texting, social media, and the like.”  
  
‘As if we have those things out here at Cache Lake,’ thought Jill.  
  
Looking at Jill directly, she continued, “Jill, I’ve been quiet for so long. It’s always been my belief that people need to work out their own differences. Herbert and I have been looking the other way . . . day after day after day. We’ve been very patient, always doing our best to not stick our noses into your business. However, this has now gone on for much too long. I feel the need to finally get involved . . . unless you tell me not to. So Jill, should I shut . . . put my head back in the sand?”  
  
Jill was surprised. Generally her grandmother was so easy going. “No grandma. You don’t have to shut up . . . certainly not.”  
  
“Well, if you’re sure, I’ll tell you how all this looks to Herbert and I.”  
  
Glancing over at her grandfather who was silent but paying close attention to the conversation, Jill replied tentatively, “Okay. If you feel you have something to say, then I’d like to hear it. In private?”  
  
“No, Jill . . . it concerns the three of you. It’s time we all talk about this.”  
  
“Okay…” said Jill, full of concern.  
  
“So, here’s what I have to say,” said her grandmother pausing. “Jill, you’ve spent the last few weeks wishing you were out at the point. I know you’ve missed the campfires and your camping buddies. You enjoy David and Ryan’s company. You aren’t a loner. And I saw how happy you were to be moving out there yesterday. I was happy, too. I was happy to see you happy. Last night, after you had all left, Herbert and I were celebrating. Finally a resolution! You deserve to be happy like that, Jill. Happy like you were yesterday . . . you were even shaking . . . shaking with excitement. And now, look at you. You’re so sad. Whatever your differences, you definitely need to put this period of your life behind you.”  
  
“I do?” asked Jill.  
  
“Absolutely! This is how I see it; after breakfast, the boys need to take all your stuff . . . and again take it all out to the point. Jill, for the rest of the summer you need to camp out there . . . at the lake. That’s where you belong. Make your grandfather and me proud. Put your differences behind you.”  
  
Jill’s jaw dropped, but her grandmother ignored her reaction and continued, “We’ll expect the three of you for breakfast each morning, but other than that, we want you kids out having fun. Reading and playing scrabble with the old folks is no way for a teen to spend her summer. This is your last summer before college. Live a little!”  
  
“But, Grandma…” said Jill in exasperation.  
  
“But nothing, young lady,” she said interrupting her. “You’re ruining your own summer, don’t you see? The boys want your company. I know how much you want to be with them. It’s so obvious. Your grandfather and I are apparently able to see things that you can’t. With age comes wisdom.”  
  
“She’s right, Jill,” said David with a smile. Jill glared at him.  
  
“You’ll thank me later; I know you will,” said her grandmother tenderly. She leaned over and gave Jill a hug.  
  
Looking over, Jill saw a look of merriment on Ryan’s face. She hadn’t expected her own grandmother to side against her.  
  
“Will do, grandma,” said David, attempting to act serious and mature. “You’re right, you know. We do want Jill with us. Ryan and I will take good care of her; we’ll look out for her. Jill will have a lot more fun!”  
  
“I know she will,” replied her grandmother. “So that’s how I see it. Do what you want, Jill. It’s your life. But I’d like to see you back out at the lake. Have some fun for Christ’s sake! Come for breakfast each morning, but otherwise, you need to be with those your own age.”  
  
Jill didn’t reply. She knew she was beaten. But more importantly, she knew that her grandmother was right.  
  
“Grandma?” asked David as they were all getting up to put their plates in the sink. “Can you help me pull together three lunches? We’re going up Chokecherry Ridge, maybe as far as Notched Knob. Sound good, Jill?”  
  
“Just perfect!” she sighed. She took a deep breath and closed her eyes. It was time to finally give in, she realized. The time was at hand. She’d already agreed to their terms, but that morning she had gotten cold feet. She wasn’t going to chicken out again. She did want this. She was ready to be ‘one of the guys.’ And most importantly, she was ready to do it for herself – not for Ryan or David – for herself!  
  
  
Shortly thereafter, they were all headed back out to the point. Jill carried the lunch and the boys again carried her tent and other belongings.  
  
“Déjà vu,” said Jill sarcastically.  
  
“I didn’t expect grandma to step up to the plate like that,” said David.  
  
“Neither did I,” agreed Jill.  
  
“Hip, Hip, Hooray!” said Ryan gleefully. “Can you say, ‘pretty titties’?”  
  
“Don’t overdo it, Ryan,” cautioned David.  
  
“There’s nothing holding her shirt on now!” rejoiced Ryan.  
  
“Ryan…” protested David.  
  
“He’s right, you know,” said Jill. “I know when I’m beaten.”  
  
“Can we set up your tent when we get back?” asked David as they reached the camp.  
  
“I guess,” said Jill. She wanted to buy time, but she also knew that she might as well get it over with.  
  
“The moment of truth!” announced Ryan, pulling his shirt up and off with a flourish.  
  
David looked at Jill. Her eyes were as big as saucers and her complexion was pale. “Are you going to be okay, Jilly?”  
  
She attempted a smile, but her heart wasn’t in it. The butterflies were going crazy inside her stomach. She saw David’s shirt fly up and off.  
  
“Time to be one of the guys, Jill. Just take your time,” said Ryan with feigned compassion.  
  
Jill scowled at him. He was trying to conceal his glee, but it was pretty obvious that inside he was reveling in victory. Doing her best to ignore him, she reached for the hem of her shirt.  
  
‘Just close your eyes and rip off the bandaid, Jill,’ she heard a voice inside her head say. She couldn’t believe she was doing this, but without turning around she lifted her shirt up and removed it, shaking her hair free.  
  
She didn’t recall which bra she had put on in the dim light that morning, so she glanced down to see what the boys were now seeing. It was one of her white bras, conservative but with a tiny amount of lace above the cups, giving it a nice, feminine appearance.  
  
Suddenly the stark reality of the moment struck Jill. She closed her eyes again – that had helped at the fire. She tried to force herself to think about how she had already been around the boys topless, but that didn’t help much. She wasn’t feeling excited now like she had been then. She thought again about how under-endowed she was, and how obvious that would be in the light of day. She tried to recall some of Ryan’s compliments, but all that she could remember was that he had compared her to a supermodel – a ridiculous comparison.  
  
“How might we make this easier?” she heard David say.  
  
Opening her eyes, she realized that it must look like she was stalling.  
  
“I’m sorry,” she said, trying to clear her head. “Okay, now where was I?”  
  
“The bra, I think,” said Ryan graciously.  
  
“I know, I know,” said Jill. “I’m trying. I really am.”  
  
“Take your time,” said David.  
  
Again, closing her eyes, she reached behind her back for the bra strap. A few seconds later, the bra went slack. Jill felt her cheeks flush, but she did her best to avoid any more delays. “Here you go,” she said unceremoniously as she took it off, baring her chest to their eyes. “Happy?”  
  
“Oh, come on, Jilly,” said David. “You’re making this sound like a chore. Have fun with it.”  
  
“I’m having a great time,” she said in a monotone voice. The truth of the matter was that she was experiencing all kinds of emotions, but she wanted to keep them to herself. She especially didn’t want them to know that it was a little exciting to have to bare her chest on cue.  
  
“You look chilly, Jilly,” said Ryan, his voice full of merriment.  
  
“Don’t tease me,” she said bashfully, grabbing a nipple in each fist. She was surprised how hard they were. “Yes, it is chilly,” she added, wanting to make sure that they didn’t think that she might be aroused.  
  
“I don’t think hand bras are allowed,” said Ryan.  
  
“Leave her alone,” said David. “Give her a little time. She was just reacting to your ‘chilly, Jilly’ comment. You only have yourself to blame.”  
  
“Thank you,” said Jill appreciatively as she forced her hands back down.  
  
“Okay, let’s go. I’ll carry the food,” said David, picking up the small backpack from the chair where Jill had deposited it.  
  
“Can we put my shirt in the backpack?” she asked, picking it up and extending it toward him.  
  
David looked at her puppy dog eyes, and then down at her stiff nipples, but then back up into her eyes before replying. Jill’s rosy cheeks deepened in color as he did so. She looked away in embarrassment but avoided the temptation to cover up.  
  
David took the shirt from her, but announced, “You won’t need it. The forecast is for sun, sun, and more sun. Sunscreen, however . . . that would be a good idea.”  
  
As Jill watched, David took her shirt and bra and stowed them with the rest of her things. She took a deep breath, realizing that they were not coming with them.  
  
“My book then?” she asked. “I might get a little reading in during our lunch break.”  
  
David took the book and put it in the backpack.  
  
“You know, Jill,” said Ryan. “I’m even looking forward to watching you read topless.”  
  
“Sounds boring,” said Jill.  
  
“Hardly,” he replied. Handing her a tube of sunscreen, he asked, “Do you want me to put this on?”  
  
Jill frowned and stuck it into the pocket of her shorts. They were small as was the pocket, making for a tight fit. “Well, I’m as ready as I’ll ever be,” she said, leading the way south along the beach. “I guess we’re headed into girls’ territory,” she added sarcastically.  
  
“Now that we’re the three amigos, there is no girls’ territory, no boys’ territory,” said David following along behind.  
  
“You make a wonderful one of the guys!” said Ryan, skipping along next to her. It was very obvious that he was working at keeping her chest in view.  
  
“Get in line, Ryan,” scolded David. “Wherever you like, but you’re making Jill uncomfortable.”  
  
“Don’t you mean, Joel?” he asked, going in front of her, but walking backwards, keeping his eyes glued to her chest.  
  
“Turn around, Bucko,” said Jill. “You’re going to trip . . . and you do make me nervous.”  
  
“Okay, okay, Joel,” said Ryan, turning but still looking over his shoulder.  
  
“This is bad enough without having to be Joel,” said Jill. “I really don’t like that nickname.”  
  
“Okay,” agreed David. “No Joel.”  
  
“Thank you,” she said, appreciating the small concession.  
  
As they passed the log, Jill nervously looked into the forest. “David, you don’t think our grandparents are going to come out to the lake one day, do you?”  
  
“No,” he replied. “I’m sure they could, but they seem content to stay at the trailer.”  
  
“I guess,” she said, worry evident in her voice.  
  
For a little bit, they walked along in silence, Ryan up front, David bringing up the rear. A time or two Ryan did actually trip.  
  
“Ryan, watch where you are going,” said Jill. She couldn’t believe how exhilarating it felt to be walking up the beach with the two boys. It was nice to not be encumbered by a shirt or bra, but it was scary that they were getting farther and farther away with each step. It was almost like it had been up at Snow Lake the day before, only on steroids.  
  
The giddy way Ryan was acting was seriously flattering . . . exciting, too. The thought that her breasts might not be her worst feature . . . that they just might be her best feature . . . was doing wonders to her soul. So many contradictory emotions were zinging around inside her that she had to try and focus on not making a fool out of herself . . . by looking too embarrassed . . . or too excited . . . or tripping. Falling flat on her face would be the worst, she realized. ‘Just what I need, skinned nipples,’ she thought.  
  
“What are you smiling about?” asked Ryan.  
  
“Nothing,” she said, realizing that she had been caught. “Now watch where you are going!”  
  
“Ryan, settle down,” said David. “You’re embarrassing me. You’re acting immature.”  
  
“He is immature!” said Jill.  
  
“Immature . . . that’s how boring people always describe fun people,” said Ryan. “…but, David, you should see the view from up here. It’s glorious!”  
  
Jill scowled, doing her best to act as if she wasn’t enjoying the attention.  
  
“Her little nipples are just . . . oh . . . so . . . pointy. It’s like her nipple erections have spread to her entire titties,” said Ryan. “Things jiggle, but just barely.”  
  
Clamping her hands over her breasts, Jill said, “You know I can hear you, right?”  
  
Ryan laughed boisterously.  
  
“Ouch!” said Jill all of a sudden, pulling her hands away from her breasts. She stopped walking and studied one of her palms carefully, a look of concern on her face.  
  
“Are you okay?” asked Ryan.  
  
“I think I got a cut,” she said. “I guess I need to be careful when they’re diamond hard like this!”  
  
“Ha! You got me!” said Ryan laughing. “I thought a bee had stung you or something.”  
  
“That’s exactly what it felt like,” said Jill teasingly.  
  
They all laughed heartily. Jill’s joke had caught the boys off guard.  
  
A moment later they resumed their hike up the beach, all of them now a little more relaxed.  
  
“Do be careful,” said David. “I have the first aid kit in the backpack, but there are only so many bandaids.”  
  
The exertion and the gradually increasing temperature meant that Jill was feeling warmer, but her nipples were not relaxing. She couldn’t take her mind off the fact that with every step she was putting more distance between herself and her clothing. Glancing at Ryan and David, she realized that there wasn’t a shirt among them. Even if they wanted to, they had no clothes to offer her . . . were they to encounter someone. All three of them were dressed in shorts and sturdy hiking shoes, nothing more.  
  
‘I guess I’m just one of the guys,’ she found herself thinking. It was actually pretty fun to be giving it a try! But it was as nerve-racking as hell. She tried to relax and enjoy herself, but her eyes were scanning the forest and the beach ahead. She wondered if she’d ever be able to relax fully while dressed like ‘one of the guys.’

**Chapter 27: Chokecherry Ridge**  
  
Jill was glad when they entered the forest at the end of the long straight beach. But even though she felt much less exposed in among the trees, she was still quite apprehensive. They were now on the main trail that connected Cache Lake West with the several cabins on the east shore, the group to which their grandparents’ cabin plot belonged.  
  
Unlike most of the trails in the area, it was wide and level, situated well back from the lakeshore. Decades earlier, it had been the road connecting the two sides of the lake; however, the BLM had stopped maintaining it, and it had become unsuitable for vehicle travel. Trees, many of them quite large, were growing in the middle of what had been the roadbed.  
  
It was still possible to drive from their side of the lake to the Cache Lake West cabins area, but it was impractical, involving taking the long way around, all the way out to Agency and back. Walking there, via the trail around the south end of the lake, was actually just as quick. The one other way to get there was straight across the lake. That was a long swim, a mile or more, but it was that very swim that had led to their discovery of Sunken Island years before.  
  
Jill and David had both always wanted a canoe. They knew that there were canoes across the lake, but for some reason, the inhabitants there seemed to get very little use out of them. Jill thought she knew why. Cache Lake West had a large recreation center with a pool, racquetball courts and other amenities. In addition to that, most of the cabins were essentially homes. She imagined the kids her age spending a lot of time indoors playing video games.  
  
As if he sensed that Jill was in a hurry to get to where the smaller Chokecherry Ridge trail branched off, Ryan proposed, “How about we stop here for a break?” He took a seat on a downed tree that paralleled the trail. Suddenly his eyes were at nipple height and Jill felt his stare burning into her chest.  
  
“Um . . . I’d like to keep going,” she muttered. As she spoke, she turned around to deprive Ryan of his prime view.  
  
“God, I love that ass!” he exclaimed as it came into view.  
  
Realizing that he was trying to make her think that he enjoyed one view as much as another, she looked back over her shoulder and scowled at him.  
  
Turning back to David, she said, “Let’s keep going . . . please.”  
  
“Why don’t you go on ahead, if you’re not ready for a break,” suggested Ryan.  
  
Jill thought about doing so, but as stressful as it was to be hiking topless with the two of them, the prospect of going on alone was even more daunting.  
  
“Umm . . . David?” she pleaded.  
  
“We should stay together,” said David, sensing Jill’s unease. “Get up, you wimp. We only just left camp. Besides, we’re on to you . . . aren’t we Jilly?”  
  
“Thanks, Pocket,” she said appreciatively once they were again moving.  
  
Addressing Ryan, he said, “Jill’s got it tough enough as it is. We don’t need to make this any worse for her.”  
  
“Just having some fun,” said Ryan. “She’s so damn cute when she’s stressing.”  
  
“That’s not nice,” remarked Jill.  
  
Ryan let loose with a wicked laugh. Jill looked back at David, shaking her head in disgust. He simply shrugged in response.  
  
A few minutes later, a small unmarked trail branched off at a sharp angle to the left. Jill felt a sense of relief knowing that the chance of an unexpected encounter was much less likely now that they were off the main trail.  
  
“Ready for that break?” she asked after they had been on the smaller trail for ten minutes or so.  
  
“I don’t need a break,” said Ryan. “You know I just wanted to see you squirm.”  
  
“David, can’t you do something about your friend?”  
  
“He’s your friend too,” replied David. “You try and get him to behave . . . if you think it’s possible.”  
  
Jill took in a deep breath and let it out. She knew full well that Ryan was going to do exactly what he was going to do.  
  
“Well, I’m taking a break,” she announced.  
  
“Then you’ll have to catch up,” said Ryan, continuing on up the trail.  
  
“Fine,” said Jill confidently. “I’ll catch up . . . after I put on sunscreen.”  
  
She saw Ryan hesitate. A moment later he had taken a seat on a convenient log.  
  
“Change your mind?” she asked with a smirk, pulling the sunscreen out of her pocket.  
  
“You were right,” admitted Ryan. “This seems like the perfect spot for a break.”  
  
“I thought so,” said Jill, exchanging glances with David. She flipped open the cap and squeezed a little into her hand. Turning her back to Ryan, she reached up and spread some of the lotion onto her neck and shoulders.  
  
“I’ll do your back if you do mine,” she said, extending the tube to David. David took it and flipped open the cap.  
  
“I’ll help,” said Ryan, hopping up.  
  
“Okay . . . that’s nice,” said Jill in an appreciative tone. “You can do David’s back while he does mine.” She enjoyed seeing disappointment replace anticipation in Ryan’s eyes.  
  
“Never mind,” he said, sitting back down.  
  
“Thanks, Pocket,” she said as he finished. She took the tube from him and he turned around.  
  
Once his back was done, she squeezed out some more cream and turned to face away from the boys. She went about rubbing the cream across her front, making every effort to look completely innocent while putting on a modestly sexy show, arching her back and stretching her neck first one way and then the other. She massaged it into her breasts while taking a deep breath, trying to keep it subtle yet make it look as if she might be enjoying herself.  
  
Looking down at herself she said, “Very important to get the nipples, isn’t that what you said, Ryan?” She did her best to make it really obvious that she was rubbing the lotion into them, even though they could only see her back.  
  
Deciding that she was done, she turned and walked towards Ryan, her stiff nipples aimed at his eyes. “It doesn’t look like I missed anywhere, does it?” she asked. Summoning a little courage, she boldly approached him but stopped well before she was within touching range.  
  
Bringing her bare chest that close to him made her blush deepen, but she thought he wouldn’t notice. His eyes were glued to her chest, his mouth hanging open.  
  
“What’s wrong? Cat got your tongue?” she asked, laughing contemptuously.  
  
She heard David chuckling as well. She looked over at him and pointed at the water bottle. David handed it to her and she took a drink.  
  
She thought about taking the teasing up a notch by letting a little water dribble down onto her chest. She thought that would be funny, but suddenly pangs of shyness passed through her, and she backed away.  
  
“Ready?” she asked, handing the water bottle back to David and starting on up the trail, trying to put a little distance between herself and the boys. “My God, what were you doing?” she whispered, quietly reprimanding herself.  
  
Heading up the trail, she expected that Ryan would try to pass her in order to reestablish his view from the front. She didn’t want that to happen.  
  
Somehow adrenalin or something like it had gotten her through the toughest part, the initial stages of exposure, but now she was suddenly realizing that it wasn’t a sprint. It was a marathon. Feelings of discomfort and awkwardness surged to the fore.  
  
‘I can’t believe I’m topless, hiking topless with two guys . . . my brother and a friend, even.’ Other similar thoughts of disbelief and inappropriateness pushed all other thoughts aside.  
  
Probably due to the speed with which she attacked the trail, Ryan didn’t pass. Instead, he fell in behind her. Her chest was far from hidden, and yet being in front meant that the boys were not able to see it. That, in and of itself, was something.  
  
She tried to relax by attempting to make herself believe that she was no longer exposed. She had a little success with that self-deception and tried to shift her thoughts to the nice scenery and the warmth of the sunshine on her golden skin.  
  
Her level of embarrassment was starting to subside when Ryan burst in. “You know Jill, the reason I used to think that your shoulders were your sexiest feature was probably because I had not yet seen your perky little titties. Now I definitely think that it’s the titties . . . combined with the nipples, of course.”  
  
Jill started to turn around to confront him, but she stopped herself, realizing that he might be trying to provoke her so that she would do exactly that.  
  
“But your back is so sexy, too! It has all the characteristics of your shoulders, and then some. It looks so long and slender now that you are topless. I never thought that a topless girl’s back would look so nice . . . I mean a topless supermodel’s back.”  
  
“Enough!” she shouted back at him over her shoulder. “You’re making me uncomfortable.”  
  
“I’m just now noticing your lack of tan lines,” he continued. “I must have been too distracted to notice them from the front. Would you turn around for a minute? I just want to study your tan?”  
  
“Forget you!” she yelled back at him, making every effort to speed up and put a little distance between the two of them.  
  
“That’s nice,” he said. “Work that ass! God, you’ve got a great ass! Sleek and muscular!”  
  
“Stop it, Ryan!” she yelled back, again without turning.  
  
“Maybe you’d like to take off the shorts. I mean, they’re cute and all, but I can almost picture that ass bare. And I’m ready to see pussy! You know we’ll get there. How about let’s take a shortcut? I’d be more than happy to carry your shorts and panties back. What do you say, Jill? Why don’t you do the rest of the hike naked?”  
  
Jill’s level of shock climbed with each sentence. ‘That couldn’t really be their goal, could it?’ she wondered. And yet she had been similarly shocked when their plan for her to be topless had been revealed. That had seemed just as absurd at the time, and yet here she was. It had happened.  
  
“I’ll bet it is a lovely pussy that you’ve got hiding between your legs. It should come out of hiding. I’m not a big fan of Hitler’s mustache if that’s the style you’re sportin’. But don’t worry; I’m sure I’ll love the looks of your pussy, no matter how you keep it groomed. By the way, I’d be more than happy to volunteer for pussy shaving duty. What do you say? Is it pussy time?”  
  
Jill was aghast at what she was hearing. She decided she’d had enough. Clamping her hands over her breasts, she spun around to confront him. Because they were on a section of trail that sloped up sharply, she looked down upon him. “You really are an asshole!” she raged, fire shooting from her eyes. “I’m going back,” she added, stepping off the trail and going around him.  
  
“Just wait a minute, Jill,” said David, reaching an arm across in front of her as she approached to pass him.  
  
“Don’t try and stop me!” she hissed.  
  
“She’s right, Ryan,” said David. “You are an asshole. She doesn’t deserve that. Here she is, finally giving in and going along with our idiotic scheme, and you go and pull this.”  
  
“You’re not any better!” she said, glaring at David.  
  
“I’m sorry,” said Ryan, finally appearing to realize that he’d crossed the line.  
  
“Sure you are,” said Jill sarcastically.  
  
“Go on ahead, Ryan,” said David. “Let me talk with my sister.”  
  
“I’m not talking to you,” said Jill even before Ryan had started to move.  
  
“Please,” requested David. “We need to talk.”  
  
“So, David,” she asked. “Was that the plan all along? Am I supposed to end up nude?”  
  
“No, Jill, don’t be silly,” he replied. Looking up at Ryan he said, “Come on, Ryan. Go on ahead.”  
  
As Ryan turned and headed off, Jill said, “I’ll bet it was. Step one, topless. Step two, completely nude.”  
  
“No, it wasn’t, Jill. You’ve got to believe me. Ryan might now be thinking that way, but it was never the plan. I only went along with it because it was only about topless, and only then because it was something that your comments over the winter made me think you’d like to try.”  
  
Jill slowed. She was torn. She wasn’t that interested in what David might have to say, but she was also not that excited about walking all the way back to camp alone.  
  
“This whole thing was a mistake. I guess I should have stuck to my guns. I don’t know why I went along with this,” said Jill.  
  
“It’s unusual, to be sure. But I wouldn’t call it a mistake. I’ve been having fun, and certainly not because of any unnatural attraction to my twin sister. It just feels so . . . what’s the right word . . . daring.”  
  
“You feel daring?” asked Jill.  
  
“For us as a group? Yes, it feels daring, I guess,” explained David.  
  
“Whatever,” said Jill, shaking her head. “But Ryan is disgusting. I’m either appalled that you are part of a scheme to get me naked, or I’m pissed at Ryan for being such an asshole, probably both.”  
  
“There was a plan to turn you into one of the guys. Topless, only topless. Nothing more. I have to say that I find it humorous that Ryan acts as if he is willing to gamble it all away . . . just at the point where it seems to all be coming together.”  
  
“But that’s Ryan. He’s an immature idiot and an asshole,” remarked Jill.  
  
Looking up the hill to where Ryan was waiting, David said, “Agreed. It’s like he doesn’t think . . . his excitement gets the best of him. Let me go and talk with him.”  
  
“Talk with him all you like,”’ said Jill. “But I don’t know what purpose that serves. Even if nudity is not the plan, I don’t need to hear talk like that. Even if I am pretending to be one of the guys, I’d still like to be treated like a lady . . . with respect. Is that too much to ask? It’s embarrassing enough being topless . . . without the pussy talk. I don’t want to go back on my word, but if I have to…”  
  
“I get it. I’ll go talk to him.”  
  
“I’m not interested in an apology. He won’t change,” she replied.

**Chapter 28: Chokecherry Ridge, continued**  
  
Jill still felt like leaving, but she didn’t. She waited while Ryan and David talked. Initially, she watched them, but then she turned her attention to the view of the lake down below. They had gained enough altitude that much of the lovely deep blue lake had come into view. Looking on across she could see Cornice Ridge and to the left the notch where she knew that Snow Lake lay hidden from view.  
  
A minute later Ryan walked by, stepping off the trail to go around her.  
  
“Where are you going?” asked Jill.  
  
“I’ve been grounded,” he replied.  
  
“Grounded?” she asked in surprise.  
  
“Yep, grounded. And I know you don’t want to hear it, but I am sorry. I was out of line.”  
  
Jill took a deep breath and blushed, suddenly becoming aware again that she was topless. She did her best to not think about that as she tried to figure out the significance of this latest development.  
  
Ryan shot her a crooked smile and then with a quick glance at her chest, he turned and headed on down the trail. Jill watched him for a moment, but then turned and looked up the hill to where David stood waiting.  
  
He signaled, obviously expecting her to join him. She gave a passing thought to continuing with her original plan, going back to camp, as well. Instead, she walked up the hill to speak with David.  
  
“You grounded him?” she asked.  
  
“I did.”  
  
“You can do that?”  
  
“We both know that Ryan does exactly what he wants to do. He prides himself on misbehaving. He said, ‘You can only be young once, but you can be immature forever!’”  
  
“So how did you manage to ground him?”  
  
“I gave him a choice. I told him that he needed to go sit in camp and think about where he went wrong.”  
  
“Where have I heard that before?” asked Jill.  
  
“So I stole dad’s words,” said David. “Like I was saying, I told him he was going to miss out on the rest of today’s topless hike . . . as his punishment.”  
  
“He agreed?”  
  
“Well, it was his choice. Miss the rest of today’s hike, or I was going to pull the plug . . . tell you that it was over and that there would be no more toplessness.”  
  
“You’d do that?” she asked in surprise.  
  
Jill had mixed emotions. That was exactly what she had wanted, that they drop the condition that she be topless. Only now that she’d had a taste, she didn’t want it to end . . . at least not immediately. Since she was giving it a try, she wanted the full experience before moving on.  
  
“Of course I’d do that. I still think that this can be fun, but there are things that are more important to me than fun.”  
  
“Like?”  
  
“Like you, Jilly. Blood is thicker than water. I wouldn’t be involved in this if I thought you’d be harmed.”  
  
Jill didn’t know what to think, but in part due to David’s brotherly words, she suddenly became very self-conscious . . . aware that she was standing in front of her twin brother, bare to the waist.  
  
“Well, ready to continue our hike?” he asked.  
  
“Umm . . . one on one like this . . . it feels awkward,” she said, covering each of her breasts with a palm. “Let’s just head back.”  
  
“I know it’s awkward,” he said. “I feel it too, but we shouldn’t go back.”  
  
“I’d rather go back.”  
  
“But Ryan . . . his punishment. I want him sitting there for hours, thinking about what he is missing. He’s got a thick skull. If we stay out here, he’ll know you are topless . . . and that he could have been here. He really is quite taken with you. This has to be painful, but he needs this pain . . . if any progress is to be made.”  
  
“Well, hmm . . . I guess I see your point, but…” said Jill. “…it was bad enough before, but just the two of us? Maybe a girl might do this with a lover, but . . . umm . . . you’re my brother.”  
  
“Don’t think of it that way,” said David. “Let’s imagine that we have gone back in time. Let’s be twelve again. Let’s just have fun hiking and forget that we’re older. Let’s forget that your tits have sprouted.”  
  
“Well . . . I guess I can try,” she said. After a little bit of consideration, she continued, “Okay, let’s go. We do need to go back with chokecherries. But I’m not going to be able to imagine that I’m twelve again if you use words like, ‘tits.’ As a matter of fact, let’s not talk about them at all . . . especially not about them sprouting.”  
  
“Agreed,” said David, as they turned and started up the trail. “I’ll try not to look at your tits, and I certainly won’t say the word, ‘tits.’ Tits, tits, tits!”  
  
He poked her in the ribs and took off running up the trail.  
  
“I mean it,” said Jill, not taking up the chase.  
  
“Twelve-year-old Jill wouldn’t have let me get away with that,” said David. Recognizing that she wasn’t going to play along, he slowed and waited for her to catch up.  
  
Shortly thereafter they were hiking along, talking, neither of them very cognizant of the fact that Jill’s breasts were wobbling, just ever so slightly, around on her chest. Only once did Jill notice David look down at her chest.  
  
She started to relax. Maybe it wasn’t going to be as awkward as she had thought. They were simply two twins dressed alike. That wasn’t so unusual, was it?  
  
“When we were really little, mom would put us in matching outfits,” Jill remarked. “Look at us now.”  
  
“Our shorts don’t match,” David observed.  
  
“You know what I mean.”  
  
“Maybe I don’t,” he said with a wink.  
  
About half an hour later they came to the meadow that was their destination. It was overflowing with chokecherry bushes, some as large as trees. It was the meadow that had caused them to name the ridge above, a ridge easily visible from the lake, Chokecherry Ridge. As far as they knew, they were the only ones with a name for it; there was very little about it that would cause anyone to take note.  
  
Side by side, they went about picking chokecherries, depositing them in the bags that David had brought in his daypack.  
  
“Whatever you do, don’t eat any,” said David.  
  
“Don’t worry,” said Jill.  
  
“How do you think that they learned that the seeds have cyanide in them?” he asked.  
  
“The hard way, I suppose,” said Jill. “I do love grandma’s chokecherry jelly, but I’m not sure I’d eat it if I hadn’t grown up eating it.”  
  
“But we know it’s safe. She wouldn’t kill her own grandchildren,” said David. “She strains out the seeds, and even if she didn’t, the cyanide wouldn’t survive the high temperature of cooking.”  
  
“I know, I know,” said Jill. “But the name chokecherry . . . it gives me the willies . . . it always has me imagining people dying.”  
  
David pantomimed a painful death, his hands at his throat. Jill showed her disinterest with a feigned yawn.  
  
A little bit later they walked part way up the ridge and found a shady spot with a lake view for lunch. Jill did her best to ignore the fact that she was topless and alone with her brother, but it wasn’t easy. There was a breeze, and it wouldn’t leave her nipples alone, tickling them relentlessly, keeping them high and tight. She tried turning sideways, but the wind would not let her forget her state of dress.  
  
“I know I’m not supposed to talk about your tits, and I won’t,” said David. Before Jill could protest, he continued, “…but you do look good. I mean, when I look at you, I see my pretty sister, my sister the athlete. Ryan sees a supermodel, and I can see why he does. But in my case, I can’t really make that big of a jump. You’re just Jill. I don’t mean that derogatorily. Am I making any sense?”  
  
“Not really.”  
  
“I mean, I just see my sister,” he replied. “If you were ugly, which you certainly aren’t, I would still see my sister.”  
  
“Are you trying to tell me that you aren’t attracted to me?” asked Jill.  
  
“I’m not sure what I’m trying to say. I DO love you . . . as a sister, though,” he said.  
  
“It better end there,” she said.  
  
“Is this awkward to talk about?”  
  
“Only if you make a pass at me,” she said.  
  
“I guess what I am trying to say is that if this summer ultimately backfires, I don’t want it to come between us.”  
  
“But you’re keeping me safe, right? You said you wouldn’t be involved if you thought I might be harmed.”  
  
“I guess I’ve realized that there is indeed risk. We can be careful, but being too careful wouldn’t be fun.”  
  
“What are you saying?”  
  
“Just that, whatever happens, I don’t ever want anything to come between us, that’s all.”  
  
Jill was trying to read between the lines, but she didn’t want to think too much about, ‘whatever happens.’ That sounded a bit ominous.  
  
“David?”  
  
“Yes.”  
  
“Why did it seem more awkward after Ryan left?” she asked. “I’ve got my theories, but you seemed to be feeling the same way.”  
  
“I’m pretty sure I know why,” he replied. “We both are dead set against any of this being able to be misconstrued as incest. Somehow the risks of that happening seem to go up when Ryan is not present. With him here, you and he are the opposing elements and I am the referee. Without him, it is just you and me.”  
  
“I think we need him. Or I need a top.”  
  
“I agree,” said David. “I just don’t have a shirt to give you. But that’s good . . . Ryan knows you’re topless. That’s as it should be. He deserves to suffer.”  
  
“I don’t like being talked at like he was doing.”  
  
“Yep,” said David, standing up. “Time to climb Notched Knob,”  
  
“I’d say, go ahead without me, but I’m not sure that is a good idea. After going up the ridge at Snow Lake, I think we need to follow the buddy system fairly strictly when climbing.”  
  
“Safer that way,” he agreed. “Let’s go then.”  
  
“But I want to sit here and read.”  
  
“Well, in that case, why don’t I just explore the gully,” said David. “I’ve always wanted to. I’ve been to the top quite a few times, but I’ve never gone down into the gully.”  
  
“I want to just sit.”  
  
“You do that,” said David. “The gully can’t be that unsafe. I’ll go alone. You read, and if I’m not back in a few hours, come and rescue me.”  
  
Jill laughed. “I’m hardly dressed for a rescue . . . or going for help. I’ll kill you if you need rescuing.”  
  
David laughed and clipped a water bottle to his belt. As he headed off, Jill sought out a more comfortable place to read. ‘Democracy in America’ was turning out to be more interesting than she had anticipated. It was thought-provoking, and it was indeed ironic that the Americans of that era were such staunch advocates of freedom and yet so many of them owned slaves. The author was right about that. She could imagine that very topic being the focus of a lecture or a class discussion that fall.  
  
The time passed relatively quickly, but Jill was definitely ready to do something different when David returned after two and a half hours.  
  
They packed up and together made their way down. Jill experienced just as much stress on the main trail as she had that morning, but again everything went without incident and they arrived back at camp just before dinner time.  
  
“There you are,” said Ryan, his face lighting up. “I was about to send out the incest police to look for the two of you.”  
  
“Don’t start with that!” said David gruffly. “That’s a topic neither of us is going to find any humor in.”  
  
“It must strike too close to home, said Ryan with a wry smile. “Get it? Incest . . . too close to home?”  
  
“Ha ha,” said David.  
  
“We mean it,” said Jill sternly, but then she noticed that Ryan was staring. She blushed, turning and looking away.  
  
“Okay, okay,” said Ryan.  
  
“Here,” said David, tossing Jill her shirt.  
  
“Hey,” protested Ryan. “We’re still shirtless. She needs to be.”  
  
“Not for long,” said David, pulling on his own shirt.  
  
“Spoilsport,” complained Ryan, as Jill’s upper body disappeared from sight.  
  
“You had your chance today,” said David. “Ya muffed it.”  
  
Jill found that it felt unusually nice to finally have a shirt on. She took a deep breath, relaxing. Opening a can of lemonade, she sat down at the fire circle, one foot up so that her heel was touching one of her buttocks. She tried to add up how many hours she had been bare. More than six, less than eight, she concluded. Giving that a little thought, she realized that in one day she had more than doubled the time that she had spent topless in the open air.  
  
While topless she had tried to relax, and yet now that she had a shirt on, she realized that she had been stressed the entire time, not really relaxing at all.  
  
“Ryan, how nice,” she commented, noticing that her tent was all set up.  
  
“It’s the least I could do,” he replied. “I do want you to feel welcome.”  
  
“You want me to be topless,” she shot back.  
  
“That, too,” said Ryan. “But David was right. I got carried away. I certainly should not have been talking about your pussy.”  
  
“And you’re talking about it again,” interjected David.  
  
“Give me a break . . . I’m simply reminding Jill of my sincere apology.”  
  
Jill blushed, his words from earlier replaying in her memory. “Enough,” she said. “I think I’m going to lie down. I got a lot of sun today.”  
  
She crawled into her tent, nodding off almost instantly. All the sun, as well as the stress of being topless, had made her one very exhausted young lady.

**Chapter 29: Jill’s Blunder**  
  
It was getting dark when she finally crawled out of the tent.  
  
“I didn’t know if we’d see you again this evening,” remarked David. He and Ryan were sitting by the fire, and it looked as if it was starting to die down.  
  
“I think I could have slept right through,” she replied. “Only I’m starving.”  
  
She smiled, noticing how both boys hopped up and went about roasting her a hotdog.  
  
“I don’t normally have two,” she said. “But right now I’m feeling like I could eat half a dozen.”  
  
“I think we might have that many,” said David.  
  
“Two is enough, but first I’ve got to pee,” she said. “Do you think grandpa and grandma will still be awake?”  
  
“It doesn’t matter,” said David. “You’ve been using their bathroom in the middle of the night, right?”  
  
“I have,” said Jill, heading off into the dark. “I’ll be back in a few.”  
  
When she returned, she had two hotdogs waiting for her on a plate with a nice helping of Indian bead salad.  
  
“Grandma gave me the salad when I took her the chokecherries,” said David. “She made it this afternoon.”  
  
“You missed a great climb up Notched Knob,” remarked David a little later, once Jill had moved on to marshmallows. Jill was puzzled. She knew that neither of them had climbed Notched Knob. She saw David wink at her. He continued, “Tarzan, here, stood right on top, pounding on her chest.”  
  
Playing along, Jill set her marshmallow fork down and stood up. She beat on her chest while giving her best rendition of Tarzan, yelling at the top of her lungs. Somewhere along the lakeshore birds could be heard scattering.  
  
“God, did I ever miss out!” exclaimed Ryan.  
  
“Serves you right!” said Jill, sitting back down.  
  
“By the way, how did you ever learn to do that?” asked Ryan. “You sound just like Tarzan . . . only your voice it a little high . . . so a female Tarzan.  
  
“When I was a young girl, I enjoyed pretending to be Tarzan . . . pounding on my chest. Like everyone in town, we had the Tarzan dvd, the Disney version. My Tarzan yell needed help, and my dad came to the rescue. He showed me a woman named Carol Burnett on YouTube. I learned it from her.”  
  
“Who’s Carol Burnett?” asked Ryan.  
  
“Just some lady with a YouTube channel, I suppose,” she said.  
  
“Do it again,” Ryan requested.  
  
“Too bad,” said Jill. “Maybe if you can behave, you’ll get to see me do it again.”  
  
“Topless?” asked Ryan, his eyes gleaming.  
  
“Only if you behave,” said Jill, pointing an index finger between his eyes.  
  
“Does it hurt the titties?” he asked.  
  
“Don’t be stupid!” she said. “I’m pounding up high. That makes it echo inside the chest. Try it.”  
  
Ryan stood up and tried.  
  
Jill and David both laughed. “Needs work,” said Jill.  
  
“Maybe you should focus on imitating Jane,” suggested David with a chuckle.  
  
“So, Jill . . . or should I call you Tarzan . . . is this your new thing. Are you going to give us your Tarzan yell every time you reach the top?” asked Ryan.  
  
“I don’t know,” replied Jill. “It just happened . . . that first time on my topless hike around Snow Lake.”  
  
“Wait,” said Ryan. “Did I really just hear what I think I heard?”  
  
“What?” said Jill.  
  
“You hiked all the way around Snow Lake topless? I knew you had taken topless selfies, but the whole way topless . . . around the lake and up the ridge.”  
  
“Oops,” said Jill, mad at herself for having let that slip.  
  
“That is so f\*\*king precious,” said Ryan in glee.  
  
Jill looked over and saw that David was laughing. “And you want us to believe that you don’t want to be seen?”  
  
“I don’t,” said Jill meekly. “I really don’t.”  
  
“But you were hiking topless. You’re a goddam nudist, aren’t you?” said Ryan.  
  
“I am not,” said Jill. “Okay . . . I . . .” Jill stuttered. She had started to concede that she enjoyed being topless, but then she thought better about that admission.  
  
She looked over and both boys were laughing and smiling a one another.  
  
“Stop it!” she said, but that only seemed to encourage them.  
  
Quite a bit later, Jill was in her tent. She could hear at least one of the boys snoring, but she was still wide awake. Again, she had made the mistake of taking a nap. She tried counting sheep, but that was a failure. Still, the night dragged on.  
  
It was warm, so she was lying on top of her sleeping bag in just a pair of panties. Gripping her nipples between thumbs and forefingers, she thought about how much sun they had seen. At least they weren’t sore; hopefully, they weren’t sunburned. Oh, my God . . . topless hour after hour . . . and this time she hadn’t been alone. What have I done? What must Ryan and David think of me after today? The thoughts of all that had transpired were scary but in an exhilarating way.  
  
Moving on from that, she again found herself replaying Ryan’s comments from earlier in the day, especially his pussy remarks. He had said something about being ready to see pussy . . . even something about being willing to volunteer for pussy shaving duty. Such a naughty boy . . . to think those things . . . but then to actually say them!?  
  
She tried to piece everything he had said together in her mind. “I’m ready to see pussy! You know we’ll get there. How about let’s take a shortcut? What do you say, Jill? Why don’t you do the rest of the hike naked?”  
  
Jill felt her cheeks warm, picturing herself hiking naked. Wow! Just wow! To get a feel for what it might be like, she slipped her panties down and off, tossing them into a corner. As she lay back down, her fingers grazed across her slit. It was dripping wet. She tried to deny that Ryan’s words excited her, and yet her pussy was telling a different story. What’s wrong with me? I’d die. I’d absolutely die if they saw me naked. I should be trembling in fear at that thought, not getting aroused.  
  
Hugging herself, she realized that she was in fact trembling. And it did seem to be in fear, but there was more to it. It was much more than fear. She tried to resist, but her finger did snake its way back down to her slippery slit. She didn’t fight it. She gave in, letting it slide back and forth. It wasn’t something she had ever really engaged in . . . at least not much . . . but a minute later she was rubbing hard and breathing deeply. She had a finger on each side, feeling the hard little bud, twirling it around in a circular motion, faster and faster. It felt so good.  
  
Thinking about walking in the sunshine, butt naked and not alone . . . with the guys . . . wave after wave of pleasure rocked her. The first one building into the second, the second building into the third. She arched her neck and opened her mouth, gasping for air. Her body stiffened and bolts of electric pleasure shot back and forth through her pelvis as she gulped hungrily for air.  
  
As she finally started relaxing, she decreased the pressure and slowed down the rubbing motion. Suddenly she became aware of something that sent her spiraling into a state of shock. Raucous laughter had erupted from the other tent.  
  
“Having a good time over there?” she heard Ryan ask, struggling to talk through his laughter.  
  
‘Oh, my God! Oh, my God! Oh, my God!’ she thought, covering her face in horror. Masturbation was not a frequent thing for her, but that had been a particularly powerful orgasm. Of course, it had been a powerful one. It had been weeks since the last time she had indulged, and it had been a particularly stimulating day, week, month.  
  
Rolling and burying her face in her pillow, she sought to disappear. How could she have been so careless? The laughter coming from the other tent continued.  
  
“And whatever you’re thinking Jill, you can’t move your tent,” said David. “Grandma won’t let you.” They both cracked up even louder at that comment.  
  
Jill bit her tongue. She knew that anything she said would only make it worse.  
  
“I’ll help you with the next one,” said Ryan. “You don’t have to go it alone.”  
  
Jill covered her ears, seeking to block out the laughter ¬– but it was still there.  
  
After about five minutes of painful suffering, she heard them both say goodnight. She didn’t respond. She was trying to pretend she didn’t exist, not that it was working for her. She had been caught red-handed.  
  
She was awake for hours after that – picturing all the embarrassment that would be waiting for her when she crawled out of her tent the next morning. Eventually, she fell asleep, hoping the morning would never come.  
  
Jill woke early. It was not a morning that she wanted to confront. She lay there thinking through her embarrassment – that which lay behind, and all that lay ahead. She wanted it all to go away, but denial wasn’t working for her. It had happened. The boys had overheard her in the throes of ecstasy.  
  
Try as she might, she was not going to be successful at inventing and selling a counterstory. For a while, she considered claiming that she had been gripped by a terrible nightmare, one that had had her thrashing about until she woke with a start. But she knew that they’d know it for the lie that it was. They’d just laugh at her for the lame attempt.  
  
She again felt the urge to get up and move her tent; however, she knew that David was right about that. She’d run once; it was a bad idea. In her gut, she knew that this latest difficulty was one she was going to have to face. She’d put herself in a most embarrassing spot, and avoiding David and Ryan for the rest of her life was not a workable strategy.  
  
She decided to get up and go for a walk. At least in that way, she would avoid crawling out of her tent straight into their laughter. It wasn’t much, but delaying the inevitable seemed worthwhile. She couldn’t avoid them forever, but she could avoid them for a little while.  
  
It was a beautiful morning, but her beach walk was altogether painful. Her mind went round and round. Try as she might, she could think of nothing other than how she had been caught frigging herself. At one point, she sought solace by trying to think of something that might be more embarrassing. Nothing came to mind.  
  
She considered missing breakfast, but that seemed as if it would be unfair to her grandmother. And then later, she’d be asked where she had been. That would force her to lie to her grandmother.  
  
Yes, better to just go to breakfast. That would cause her next face to face meeting with the boys to occur under supervised conditions. That would keep the boys from being too rude. They wouldn’t dare to bring up her orgasm in the presence of her grandparents.  
  
She decided to go a little early in order to ensure that she was there and talking to her grandparents when they arrived.  
  
“Oh, Jill, how delightful!” said her grandmother as soon as Jill opened the door.  
  
“It smells wonderful. What’s for breakfast?” she asked as she climbed up into the trailer.  
  
“Dutch babies,” answered her grandmother. “First time I’ve made them this summer. Oven’s a bit small, but it works.”  
  
“I love Dutch babies,” said Jill, her enthusiasm genuine.  
  
“…with powdered sugar and fresh lemons, right?”  
  
“Exactly!” said Jill.  
  
“Look on the table . . . fresh lemons, just for you!” said her grandmother pointing.  
  
“You spoil me rotten, Grandma!”  
  
“I love spoiling you, young lady,” said her grandmother, pouring her a cup of coffee.  
  
The pleasant conversation and the thought of Dutch babies were doing Jill a world of good. Her troubles hadn’t gone away or been forgotten, but the distraction was welcome.  
  
“I’m so glad to hear that you had such a nice day yesterday,” said her grandmother.  
  
Jill stiffened. “I had a nice day yesterday?”  
  
“David filled us in on all the details, didn’t he Herbert?” Wondering what they knew, Jill looked over and saw her grandfather nodding. Her grandmother continued. “I knew things would improve for you if you just moved your tent out to the point. Was I right, or was I right?”  
  
“Umm…” said Jill, not knowing what to say.  
  
“I was making Indian bead salad when he dropped by with the chokecherries,” said her grandmother.  
  
“He said you were napping,” interjected her grandfather.  
  
“I made him wait so that he could take some of the salad with him for dinner. Did you get some last night?”  
  
“Yes. Thanks! I love that salad.”  
  
“Well, David said that the two of you had a marvelous hike . . . just the two of you . . . he went on and on. I can’t recall where he said Ryan was. Where was Ryan?”  
  
Jill didn’t know how to respond.  
  
“Grounded,” interjected her grandfather.  
  
“That’s it, grounded,” echoed her grandmother nodding. “Well, like I was saying, David said that the two of you had a wonderful hike . . . up to pick the chokecherries. He thinks the world of you, that brother of yours. He told us that it was the best day he’s had all summer . . . thanks to getting to spend the day with you. He told us about your lunch, and then how you relaxed and read while he explored.”  
  
“He did?” she asked.  
  
“He is so proud of his sister . . . so complimentary. That boy really does care about you. He bragged about all the classics that you are reading this summer. How you want to be well prepared for college. Of course, Herbert and I already knew all about that, but it was nice to hear it . . . coming from David.”  
  
“He mentioned the books I’m reading?” asked Jill, surprise evident in her voice.  
  
“Oh, yes, he named them all . . . at least as far as I know,” said her grandmother. “I thank my lucky stars that our family was blessed with twins . . . we’re so very blessed,” she said. “He did share with us some concerns . . . about your self-esteem, however.”  
  
“In confidence,” said her grandfather.  
  
“Right . . . in confidence,” said her grandmother. “I guess I shouldn’t mention that, but he sees you coming out of your shell. He thinks you are shy and sell yourself short . . . especially when it comes to your relations with the opposite sex.”  
  
“Dear, you promised David,” said her grandfather.  
  
“So I did,” said her grandmother. “Forget I said anything, but I’m so proud of him for trying to help you see yourself as the rest of the world sees you. Very proud of that boy. Very proud of both of you! Please don’t tell him I said anything.”  
  
“Oh, I won’t,” said Jill, “but what more did he say?”  
  
“Not anything more about that,” she said. “But he did really enjoy your company yesterday. He’s been missing that. It’s fun to see the two of you again having fun. You two have always been inseparable. It was hard on Herbert and me to see your relationship so strained the past few weeks.”  
  
Jill wanted to hear more about what David had said. She had been enjoying the little glimpse behind the curtain, but right then the door opened. Wanting to crawl under the table, she looked meekly down as the boys entered. The only saving grace was that she knew that nothing embarrassing would be said in front of her grandparents.

**Chapter 30: Blunder, continued**  
  
After a quick discussion about the Dutch babies, David addressed her directly. “Good morning, Jill. You were up with the sun. I hope you got a good night’s sleep.”  
  
“S…slept fine…a…and you?” she stuttered.  
  
“I’ll bet you slept fine . . . after wearing yourself out…” said Ryan.  
  
“…on the hike yesterday,” interrupted David.  
  
Jill looked over and saw David giving Ryan a nasty stare. She felt like closing her eyes and putting her fingers in her ears and chanting, “La, la, la,” to block out all sight and sound. She could hear David talking about their hiking plans for the day, but she was in too much pain to try and follow the conversation.  
  
Suddenly she heard her grandmother remark, “Jill, your face is so red! Are you feeling well?”  
  
Realizing that she was beet red with embarrassment, Jill froze.  
  
“It’s so stuffy in here grandma,” said David. “Look, you’re just as red as Jill!”  
  
“I am?” asked their grandmother in surprise. “Let’s open a few windows. The stove has been on all morning.”  
  
Jill felt grateful for David’s deflection and tried to let him know so with her eyes.  
  
She glanced over at Ryan. He had his head tilted back and his eyes closed. His mouth was open and he was breathing deeply. As she watched, he reached up and ran his fingers through his hair. She’d seen that before. In horror. she realized that he was pantomiming Meg Ryan’s restaurant orgasm from ‘When Harry Met Sally.’  
  
Without giving any thought to the repercussions, she delivered the most forceful kick she could muster to one of his shins under the table. Her only regret was that the seat was blocking access to his balls.  
  
“Shit, Jill! What was that for?” he shouted in obvious pain.  
  
“You know very well,” said David, delivering a similar kick to his other leg.  
  
“Ouch! Goddamn you, David,” he exclaimed.  
  
“That’s enough!” yelled their grandfather, slamming his fist down onto the table. “Not at the table!”  
  
Jill’s eyes locked with Ryan’s. They stared angrily at one another.  
  
“Now apologize or leave!” insisted their grandfather, glaring at his two grandkids.  
  
Taking a deep breath, Jill obliged, “I’m sorry, grandfather.”  
  
Jill watched as her grandfather looked over at David.  
  
“I’m sorry, grandfather, grandmother,” he said.  
  
As she watched, her grandfather’s eyes shifted to Ryan. “Ryan?” he asked.  
  
“I didn’t do anything,” he said.  
  
“Don’t give me that, young man!” said her grandfather. “I’m sure you deserved it. The Wahlund twins don’t lash out without good reason. Now apologize, or my kick is next.”  
  
“Okay, okay . . . I’m sorry,” he said.  
  
Jill felt like snickering, but she kept it in.  
  
After that, things seemed as if they might settle down, but then Ryan crammed the last of his Dutch baby into his mouth and got up and left.  
  
“Well, that was a lovely breakfast,” said their grandmother shaking her head.  
  
“I’m sorry,” said Jill.  
  
“I know you are, honey,” she said. “As Herbert said, he must have deserved it. But spare me the details.”  
  
Jill got up and started working on the dishes.  
  
Once he was ready to leave, David got up and asked, “See you in camp shortly, Jilly Bean?”  
  
“I don’t know, Pocket,” she replied with a heavy sigh. “I think I might just read today.”  
  
“Oh, Jill, after all the fun you two had yesterday? Reading’s good . . . in moderation . . . and you’ve already read so much this summer. I think you and David should go hiking again,” said her grandmother. “And David, I think Ryan must need to be grounded again.”  
  
“I suppose so,” said David with a chuckle. Looking at Jill he continued, “Here, I’ll help you with the dishes. Then we can go back to camp together. It’s going to be a warm day again . . . and we both know what that means! Lots of sunscreen!” He grinned.  
  
Jill started blushing anew. She did know what that meant. And she could tell that she wasn’t going to be able to slip away. The idea of hiking topless again was giving her the butterflies, but it might be better than sitting around and thinking about how embarrassed she felt because her orgasm had been overheard.  
  
“I’ve never been more embarrassed in my life,” she told David as the two of them walked back to camp a little later.  
  
“Don’t be,” said David. “Guys do it . . . a bit more than girls, I hear.”  
  
“Maybe, but I’m still so embarrassed.”  
  
“At least it sounded like a really great one . . . earth shaking even!” he remarked with a chuckle.  
  
“David! Don’t make it worse than it already is . . . please.”  
  
“I know . . . that’s Ryan’s job,” said David with a grin.  
  
“Thanks for kicking him, by the way.”  
  
“He deserved it! I saw what he was doing.”  
  
“He can be nice, but he is very skillful when it comes to being an asshole,” she said.  
  
“And between you and me, he masturbates as much as anyone . . . quite a lot lately. He probably thinks I don’t know. He’s probably beating off right now,” said David.  
  
“Eww . . . TMI.”  
  
“Every afternoon he slips out of camp. He probably thinks it looks as if he is going to relieve himself, and I suppose he is . . . just not number one or number two.”  
  
“David!” she complained.  
  
“Well, what do you expect? Unlike you, we share a tent.”  
  
“Yes, that would be awkward,” agreed Jill. After a pause, she continued, “I’m really surprised you told the grandparents about grounding him.”  
  
“I sort of told them that as a joke . . . when they asked why the two of us were hiking alone. I didn’t expect them to believe me.”  
  
“But they had to have asked questions?”  
  
“Oh, they did. I just told them, ‘Oh, you know how Ryan is.’ That seemed to satisfy them . . . to my surprise.”  
  
Jill laughed, “Well, they probably do know pretty well what he is like.”  
  
Ryan was there as they entered camp. Once he was sure he had Jill’s attention, he said, “Your next orgasm is on me!” He stuck out his tongue, wiggling it all around.  
  
“You’re so gross. Leave me alone,” she said, diving into her tent.  
  
“Don’t knock it, till you’ve tried it!” said Ryan. “I’ll make you beg for more.”  
  
“Go away!” she shouted, burying her face in her pillow, again trying to block out the world.  
  
A few minutes later she heard David’s voice. “Topless hiking time, Jilly. On your feet!”  
  
His words caused goosebumps to rise on her arms and legs. Her nipples responded similarly. She knew that she had agreed to this arrangement. It was not going to be easy.  
  
“Do I have to?” she asked, her reluctance genuine.  
  
“You have no choice in the matter, I’m afraid,” he replied. “You’re one of the guys now . . . and it’s warm. It’s getting warmer by the minute.”  
  
‘No choice in the matter,’ she thought. On one level, that made it all okay. It wouldn’t be her deciding to do it, to again bare her chest. And yet nothing about this had gotten any easier. She had done it at the fire, and she had done it the day before, so it should be no big deal . . . and yet her natural instinct was to keep herself covered. Just because it had already happened, didn’t make it okay . . . or any less scary. Her insecurities were still intact.  
  
And, even if some of the emotions that she experienced while topless were enjoyable – well – that she couldn’t let them know. Those thoughts need to remain private. But on this particular day, she had an actual reason for wanting to hike topless. She thought that having her bare breasts in front of Ryan’s eyes would take his mind off of what he had heard the night before.  
  
She knew that she hadn’t heard the last of it, but by hiking topless the process of moving on would be begun. She forced herself to focus on that as a goal as she struggled with her reluctance to bare her upper body. In the end, ‘you have no choice in the matter,’ carried the day. She took off her shirt and then her bra. Closing her eyes and taking a breath full of courage, she emerged from the tent ready to go.  
  
“Who’s got the sunscreen?” she asked bravely, only then realizing that neither of them had taken off their shirts.  
  
“Umm . . . guys . . . not fair!” she complained. “You said it was topless hiking time. But . . . you’re supposed to have taken off your shirts.”  
  
“I think it might be more fun like this!” said Ryan gleefully.  
  
“No, no, no! That wasn’t the deal,” said Jill, turning to go back into her tent for her shirt.  
  
“Not an option!” said Ryan, stepping in front of her tent.  
  
“Hey! ’One of the guys,’ never meant I had to be the only one topless. I only have to be topless if both of you are,” said Jill, suddenly feeling even more uncomfortable.  
  
“She’s right, you know,” said David, removing his shirt. “Rules are rules.”  
  
“Now look who’s the stickler,” said Ryan, also removing his shirt.  
  
“Hey, give me a break. This ‘one of the guys’ idea was yours, remember?” said Jill, glad to not be the only one without a shirt. Of course, they were guys, but it did somehow make her feel slightly more comfortable for them to also have their shirts off.  
  
“Sharp Tooth, really?” asked Jill upon learning of their chosen destination. They had named the mountain peak as kids, with the ‘Land Before Time’ video in mind. It had reminded them of a T-rex tooth.  
  
“I mentioned it at breakfast. Weren’t you listening?” asked David.  
  
“But we’ll have to go along the road,” said Jill, ignoring David’s question. “What if there’s a car? At least let me bring a shirt.”  
  
“Nope . . . no shirt,” said David. “You’re ‘one of the guys.’ We don’t need no stinking shirts!”  
  
“But…” she complained.  
  
“We’ll keep you safe,” said David. “And if you see a car, you can run for the trees.”  
  
“Thanks a lot,” said Jill with a frown. “What are you looking at?” she asked, glaring at Ryan.  
  
“Duh . . . Tits!” he replied, matter-of-factly.  
  
“That’s what I thought,” said Jill, turning and departing camp. Their normal route to the road went right past the trailer and down the driveway, but there were other trails. As she was topless, she chose one of those.  
  
A few minutes later the three of them were on the road, walking towards the bridge. The road was long and straight, and Jill kept turning her head, watching for a car from either direction.  
  
“Wouldn’t it be funny if your grandparents picked right now to drive into town, Jill?” asked Ryan.  
  
“Yeah, real funny, Ryan,” she said. She almost said, ‘asshole’ instead of ‘Ryan.’ Thinking that he might start teasing her about the night before, she bit her tongue. ‘Best to just be nice and give him other things – like my boobies – to think about,’ she decided. She was pleasantly surprised that so far her orgasm in the tent the night before seemed to have been forgotten. Ryan seemed just as focused on her chest as he had been the day before.  
  
“Why don’t we jog?” asked Ryan. “Won’t that be better, Jill? It’ll get us off the road much more quickly.”  
  
Knowing full well that he just wanted to see her jiggly bits bouncing around, Jill decided that he did have a good point. She wanted to get off the road – the sooner the better.  
  
“Race you to the bridge,” she shouted, instantly accelerating to a full sprint.  
  
She knew that she should probably go easy on him – let him pass so that he could watch her A-cup beauties at their lively best – but she was far too competitive for that. If he was going to get the view he was hoping for, he was going to have to work for it!  
  
The bridge was still a long way off, but Jill didn’t let up. It wasn’t until she was close enough to see her panties tied to the post that she slowed just enough to let him pass. Once Ryan was in the lead, she slowed still further, making it a little easier for him to get an eyeful.  
  
‘The old Jill would never have done that,’ she heard a voice in her head say. She was amazed at how far she’d come. At least around Ryan and David, she now wasted little mental energy on her breast size insecurities. She was still shy and modest, but that only added to the scary yet exhilarating aspects of being topless. Now it was less because her breasts were small; now it was primarily due to the simple fact that they were exposed.  
  
She and Ryan pulled up, stopping in the center of the bridge. Jill did a quick spin to verify that the road was empty in both directions. David came up thirty seconds or so later as Jill and Ryan were still working to catch their breath.  
  
“Lazy butt!” said Jill, her hands on her hips, walking it out.  
  
“I just didn’t see the point,” said David.  
  
They took a brief pause to look over the railings at the river flowing beneath. Jill pulled out the sunscreen and did her best to apply some discretely. On that score, her success was quite limited.  
  
“Let’s go,” said Jill stowing the sunscreen in a pocket and walking on across the bridge. With her sweat and the little titty show, she’d earned the right to get off the road. It was time to collect her winnings.  
  
The trail on the near side of the outlet followed the river closely. It was the trail that they used to return by when they floated the outlet. Looking down at that trail from the bridge, Jill saw herself, just so many days before . . . steam coming out her ears as she marched along with her bikini top tied at her hip.  
  
‘Such progress,’ she thought, shaking her head.