**Tracey in Kizhirstan**

by donnabarber81

**Prologue:**

Tracey Smith shivered in fear as she felt the imminent approach of doom. She had gone on a backpacking holiday with a group of friends to the Asian country of Kizhirstan, one of the many countries that had once been part of the Soviet Union before gaining its independence after the collapse of Communism. At first they had loved the mountains, the rugged and wild landscape and the wide open spaces of the land. They had climbed the highest peak in the country, photographed the spectacular waterfalls and explored its astonishing variety of scenery. Their 'adventure holiday' group included Mr Chambers, the team leader, his son John, his girlfriend Emily and her friends Lucy and Stacey as well as Tracey. It had been a wonderful few days until it all went disastrously wrong for them.

The group was explorind a new area and saw in the distance the gleaming snow-capped peaks of the second highest mountain in Kizhirstan. All of them gazed at in with a sense of excitement.

'How long before we can reach there?' Tracey asked eagerly.

'Well, if we take the official trail it will be three days climbing away. But I've noticed a short cut that might cut our journey time dramatically. If we follow that route we could be at least at the base of the mountain by tomorrow.'

The party agreed to Mr Chambers' suggestion and began trekking. Before long they saw a sign in the local Kizhir language.

'What does it say?' asked Tracey.

'No idea,' Mr Chambers said. 'They know they get international tourists climbing the mountains these days - why don't they put signs in English as well?'

But in fact there WAS a sign in English behind the one in Kizhir but the heavy fall of snow had covered it up. If they had bothered to read it they would have seen that it read 'Danger. No admittance.'

But no one bothered to clear away the snow on the second sign. Pressing on in a determined manner, they found the trail was more treacherous than before.

'Maybe we should turn back and take the standard trail,' Tracey suggested.

'Nonsense!' Mr Chambers laughed. 'We'll be all right. Don't be such a wimp!'

Then it happened. The snow beneath their feet became loose and slowly slid down the side of the mountain. As the party made a desperate retreat, the dislodged snow gathered both volume and momentum. Before long it had turned into an avalanche and it cascaded relentlessly down the mountain. They gazed in horror as they saw its inevitable and deadly progress towards the small village which they could just see in the distance.

'What the hell?' Mr Chambers said. 'I've been mountaineering for years and I never saw an avalanche start so quickly and get momentum so rapidly.'

'And the village in the distance is right in its path,' said Tracey anxiously. 'I hope they'll be all right.'

In a thoroughly subdued mood, the party trudged back carefully along the way they had come, making their way to the village behind them. They arrived to find the locals angry and shocked and full of the news about the village some miles further forward.

'There are fifty people injured by that avalanche,' one of the locals who spoke English told them. 'Some of them are injured so seriously they may not survive.'

The climbing party gazed at each other anxiously. They were filled with a sense of guilt and fear. What would happen if the worst came to the worst and someone died?

**1**

The party passed an uneasy and sleepless night as they waited for news to arrive. Next morning a group of twelve police

officers arrived in the village where they were staying, all heavily armed.

As the only Westerners present the climbing party stood out like the proverbial sore thumb. Sure enough, the policemen made their way across to them.

The one who seemed to be in charge - or at least the one who spoke English - pointed his gun at the party and spoke.

'You are the group of mountain climbers who have been in Kizhirstan exploring our mountains?'

'Yes, we are,' Mr Chambers answered.

'In that case,' the policeman said, 'you are all under arrest. You will be taken to our local jail and held for further questioning.'

There didn't seem much point in arguing especially when all the police were pointing loaded guns at them. Reluctantly they got up and made their way out of their hostel and into the waiting police van. Soon they were driven across the bumpy and not very good roads towards the nearest town. On arrival they were all taken inside a large concrete building, guarded by electric fences.

'This is the local prison,' said the lead copper. 'You will be held here on remand and a specialist team of officers will arrive later to question you. That is all.'

'Can we speak to the British Consulate, please?' Tracey asked.

'The Consulate is a day away from here,' he told her. 'But I will let them know of your presence and get them to send over a representative to talk to you.'

Then he left and the group found itself in a reception area. Ten prison guards, all but two of them male, stood around and looked at them curiously. It was probably the first time Westerners had ever been inside their jail.

Then an older man arrived.

'I am the prison governor,' he told them in halting English. 'You are here as remand prisoners so you will be placed in a separate block rather than in the main prison. I need your details to enter in my prison records.'

The party then gave him their names, addresses, next of kin, blood groups, dates of birth, employment status, phone numbers and e-mail addresses. After that information was entered in the prison database he continued.

'I do not yet know what action the police intend to take. No doubt that will become clearer tomorrow. In the meantime all of you will be held here until I have further instructions on how to proceeed. In the meantime we will need to process you all into the prison. All of you will strip naked, please, so that you may undergo a full body cavity search.'

All of them stared at the governor in horror. Mr Chambers was the first to recover his voice.

'Is that really necessary?' he asked.

'It is procedure,' the governor said simply. 'If you do not co-operate then we will be compelled to strip you forcibly.'

'All right,' Mr Chambers said hastily. 'But couldn't it be done in private?'

'No,' the governor responded. 'It is procedure, that is all. Now do not waste time by arguing. All of you will please begin stripping now!'

All of them reluctantly prepared to begin undressing when the governor stopped them abruptly.

'No,' he said firmly. 'One at a time. You first!'

He pointed at Mr Chambers who almost blushed. He was now forty-eight and not the fine physical specimen he had once been and in spite of his relative fitness had not exposed his body naked in public for years. Reluctantly he took off his clothes. At last he was naked and the governor pointed to one of the two female guards and spoke quickly in Kizhir. She smiled and began to 'search' his naked body, deliberately playing with his cock and trying to excite him.

The other female guard repeated the process with his son John. He had an erection very quickly and the guard smiled to see his obvious state of arousal.

Then it was the turn of the girls, who, as they had guessed, were all 'searched' by the male guards. Tracey was the last in line and her search was the most intrusive, invasive and lingering of all. When it was finally over she blushed in shame and embarrassment.

'Good,' said the governor. 'Now you will be taken to your cells.'

'Can't we at least have our clothes back?' Tracey pleaded.

'No,' the governor smiled. 'Procedure!'

So the party found itself marched along a corridor to a cell block where the two men were put in one cell and the four women in another.

'What happens now?' asked a bewildered and increasingly frightened Tracey.

'How the fuck do I know?' Emily retorted. 'All I know is this is some tin pot Third World country and not like Europe. To be honest I'm scared stiff about what might happen.'

And, as events proved, she was absolutely right to be frightened!

**2**

The four women lay listlessly in their cell, awaiting developments. Tracey was in a corner by herself and Emily, Lucy and Stacey began whispering to one another.

'You know, we might be totally fucked if we're not careful,' said Emily. 'We need to get our stories straight because this place is not exactly a Geneva Convention type of country.'

'What do you mean, get our stories straight?' Stacey asked. 'We all know what happened. We took a short-cut instead of following the main path and then there was an avalanche. It was an accident and that's all. Nothing bad will happen. Well, I guess they might kick us out of the country, possibly fine us but nothing more than that.'

'That's all you know,' Lucy chipped in. 'They've still got the death penalty here. So if anyone dies I don't much fancy our chances with their justice system. We'll probably get found guilty and sentenced to death.'

The three women stared at one another thoughtfully.

'That can't happen,' said Emily finally. 'There's no way we can let the bastards string us up or however else they execute people in this backwater.'

'Got any ideas how we can get out of it?' Lucy asked.

'Yes,' Emily said quietly. 'We blame it all on Tracey over there.'

Lucy and Stacey stared at her in astonishment.

'How are we going to do that?' Lucy asked after a brief silence.

'Easy,' Emily told her. 'We just stick to our story.'

'Which is what exactly?'

'That we all wanted to stick to the official trial but Tracey decided she wanted to take the short cut. Even when we saw the sign - although we couldn't understand it, we guessed it was some kind of warning - she still insisted on us going that way to the mountain. And when we still hesitated she just started charging off on her own and we more or less had to follow her before she got into danger.'

'And the avalanche?'

'We'll blame it on Tracey. She was clumsy and her feet made the snow slide because she was walking awkwardly and dislodged it as she hurtled along. Much too fast.'

'OK,' said Stacey, 'it sounds a fairly good plan. But what about John and his Dad? What happens if they tell a different story from us?'

'Oh, that's easy enough,' Emily smiled. 'I'll ask the guard to let me see my boyfriend. He won't take much persuading to go along with our story!'

So Emily called the guard and explained that she needed to speak with her boyfriend John Chambers. The guard didn't seem too happy but Emily spread her legs slightly apart as she spoke and licked her lips with her tongue and he seemed to melt.

'In corridor,' he said. 'Just you two. No one else.'

'That's fine,' Emily smiled.

Then John was quickly brought out of his cell and taken to meet Emily in the corridor. At that point she quickly explained the plan they had come up with.

'But it's not true, is it?' John protested. 'And Tracey doesn't deserve it, does she?'

'Doesn't she?' Emily said with a cold glance. 'Do you think I didn't notice the way you looked at that bimbo - especially when she was naked and being strip-searched? Anyway, look at it logically. You don't want you or your Dad to wind up stuck for years in a prison in this hell-hole, do you? And Lucy and Stacey are my friends. Tracey is nothing, no one. She's just a bimbo who works for your Dad. We don't even like the bitch. So come on, do yourself, your Dad, me and all of us a favour and go along with our story. That way she gets stitched up and we can come out of it looking like the responsible, caring and sensible parties while Tracey comes across as irresponsible, uncaring and stupid. And think of the consequences if you don't go along with what we've thought up. You and your Dad and me and my friends all go down and get sent to some awful prison in this dump. What's Tracey to you? Or any of us? Nothing, that's all. So let's do ourselves all a favour and make out that it was all her fault the accident happened. Besides,' she added reassuringly, 'it was an accident. Even in a place like this I don't think they'll look at it as anything else. And she's British - they'll probably let her off lightly. Please, darling!'

John looked into his girlfriend's pleading eyes and smiled back at her.

'OK, I'll go along with it. I'll talk Dad round and then we'll all have our stories straight for when the police get back. And I think the British Consul's due tomorrow so hopefully he can help us out too.'

They kissed and then the two of them returned to their cells. Emily nodded at her two friends and came and sat down with them again.

'He's agreed,' she whispered. 'He's giving the story we agreed on to his Dad so everyone will be singing from the same hymn sheet when the cops arrive.'

'Except Tracey, of course,' Lucy said.

'Well, yes. But in this instance that won't do us any harm and will only confirm our story and make it look as if Tracey is the one with something to hide and trying to shift the blame. Besides,' said Emily, a steely gleam in her eyes, 'at least it will not just get us off the hook but get rid of that big-titted bimbo slut for good! I've noticed ever since she came on the expedition John keeps giving her sly looks as if he fancies her. At least this way I can put a stop to her whoring!'

**3**

A couple of hours after the discussion among the members of the party, guards came to their cells. They went to the father and son's cell first and took out Mr Chambers for questioning. After twenty minutes he was returned to his cell and John was summoned.

Then it was the turn of the girls. They too were interviewed one by one with Tracey being the last to be taken out of her cell and brought before the governor.

Tracey stared down at the floor, feeling nervous but mostly sad about the people who had been injured by the avalanche. She gave the governor a brief account of what had happened and then asked him if they could have some clothes. Again he gave the same infuriating answer.

'No, it is procedure.'

'When will the Consul be coming?'

'Someone from the Consulate is due to arrive in about three hours time.'

'Can we have something to eat?'

'Food will be taken to your cell in an hour from now.'

'And the police - when will they be interviewing us?'

'Some hours from now. They are still investigating the scene of the tragedy and the hospitals are still dealing with those who were injured. Give me your account of events and I will take it down and pass it on to the police when they arrive.'

'Why are we being interviewed separately?'

'Procedure,' came the inevitable answer.

Then Tracey went over the disaster that had resulted in the avalanche.

'I'm truly sorry for what happened,' she said. 'I hope everyone is all right.'

'We will see,' said the governor. 'Go now.'

Tracey was led back to her cell, not much wiser than before. She could only hope that the 'someone from the Consulate' would be able to get them out of their present horrific and frightening situation.

**4**

An hour after Tracey's meeting with the governor everyone received their 'lunch.' It was a thin soup with an indeterminate flavour accompanied by two slices of dry, stale bread.

After lunch had been eaten they just waited for further developments.

Then, after what seemed an eternity, the cell door was finally opened. As usual, each of them was led out separately to meet the man from the British Consulate. Tracey was the last to meet with him.

'Tracey Smith?' he asked. 'Neil Davis, British Consulate. I've already spoken with the others and of course the governor of the prison. Until I've heard from the police I won't have a fuller picture. In the meantime, do you have any questions you'd like to ask me?'

'Well,' said Tracey hesitantly, 'I have asked the governor if we could have some clothes but he's said no. Is there any way you could persuade him to change his mind?'

'I'm afraid not,' Neil Davis smiled. 'I assume he told you it was procedure?'

'That seems to be his favourite English word,' said Tracey, rather bitterly. 'Well, what about a lawyer?'

'Oh, I can organise that for you. I'll get you an English-speaking lawyer and he'll defend you if the case comes to court.'

'And is that likely?'

'Hard to tell. My guess is it probably will go to trial but maybe not for about a month. I'm afraid the wheels of justice do grind exceedingly slow in Kizhirstan.'

'And in the meantime - are we going to be held here in prison on remand?'

'I'm afraid so. It's just...'

'Procedure,' Tracey finished the sentence for him. 'Right, please don't hold back. I'd like you to run through the system if the case does get to court.'

'Well, to begin with the police will need to investigate thoroughly and then they'll question everyone involved. After that they'll decide whether or not to press any kind of charges. It all depends on how they finally decide to regard the events on the mountainside. You could be looking at an accident, gross negligence, criminal negligence, manslaughter or, in the very worst case scenario, murder.'

'Murder?' Tracey gasped. 'That's ridiculous. There was never any intention to hurt anyone or even to cause an accident - let alone to kill anyone.'

'Well, let's hope it doesn't come to that,' said Neil. 'Now if they rule it as an accident, the odds are that you'll get a public flogging, certainly deportation and perhaps some prison time. If they call it gross negligence you'll get a public flogging, definitely some prison time and then deportation. If it's criminal negligence it will be a public flogging, much more prison time and then deportation. For manslaughter it's a public flogging, a LOT of prison time and deportation. For murder - well, it's either execution or life imprisonment.'

The colour drained away from Tracey's face. She was shocked and utterly unable to believe the situation she was in.

'So they - might - even try to make out it was murder? And we could be - executed?'

'I'm sure it won't come to that,' Neil told her reassuringly. 'Let me first explain how the justice system works over here. The police will investigate and question the various parties and if they feel there's a case to answer they'll pass things on to the prosecutor's office. They will decide what charges to file and then they will bring the defendant to court. Just before that happens the police will have one final session of questioning to see if the defendant wants to plead guilty. If they offer a plea bargain it's probably a good idea to take it because if you get offered one and refuse you'll get a more severe sentence if they subsequently find you guilty in court.'

'And how likely is that?'

'Well, since independence only 14 defendants have managed to be acquitted in court so the odds are not good. And of course under Kizhir law the defendant is always presumed guilty unless they can prove their innocence which can of course be quite difficult to do. Hearsay evidence is admissible; the standard of proof is a lot lower than it would be in Europe; and there will be a jury of ten as well as a judge. All men, I'm afraid. Kizhirstan is not exactly noted for a feminist tradition. But I can promise you we'll do the best we can if the worst comes to the worst and there's a full trial.'

'But even in the best case scenario we'll get a public flogging?'

'I'm afraid so. The Kizhir justice system firmly believes that corporal punishment helps to reduce crime, set an example to others who might think about offending and make the criminal getting punished less likely to re-offend.'

'OK,' said Tracey sadly. 'And how does the - flogging - work?'

'Well, the criminal is naked in public and will receive anything from a dozen strokes of the cane up to a hundred, depending on how severely the offence is regarded.'

'Oh my God!' Tracey exclaimed. 'How am I going to be able to stand that?'

'Well, let's hope it doesn't come to that,' Neil smiled. 'Because you're Westerners they may go easy on you. So far I think only two other Westerners have ever been put on trial and convicted since independence.'

'What happened to them?'

'They received a dozen strokes of the cane and were deported.'

'I suppose that's probably the best I can hope for,' Tracey almost whispered.

The fear was growing inside her. She could only hope that the man from the Consulate could pull enough strings and that the police would be happy to rule it an accident and that the courts would be lenient with them.

Of course she still had no idea that the rest of the party had decided to betray her and even Neil had been told the same false story about Tracey being entirely responsible for the avalanche.

As he left he took a good hard look at the naked Tracey and liked what he saw very much. Knowing how corrupt the justice system in Kizhirstan was (and pretty much patriarchal as well) he began to wonder if he could come to an arrangement with the local officials to have some fun with Tracey after she was convicted. He knew already that it was 99% certain that she would be but he now concentrated on seeing to it that not only was the smallest element of doubt removed but that she would get a harsh sentence rather than simply the minimum of 12 strokes of the cane in public and deportation. Once she had been properly sentenced and was a genuine inmate rather than simply a remand prisoner he knew that the prison system would see to it that she was treated with exceptional harshness. The concept of human rights hadn't made the slightest inroads into the psyche or judicial system in Kizhirstan and Tracey was about to discover a new world of nightmare.

If Tracey hadn't been so focused on her depression she might have noticed the lustful and no longer kind way in which Neil looked at her before he left but she was too lost in the vision of a public caning.

I wish now I'd never come here, she thought sadly.