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## Backpacking with Ian, Part 2

"We're going up there?" Ian asked incredulously.

"Before we eat lunch, yes. The key is slow and steady," I replied. "Want to lead?"

"Sure, but let me know if I go too slow."

The trail suddenly narrowed as we wound our way between large boulders at the bottom of the rockslide. As we climbed higher, large rocks, then small rocks, replaced the boulders as we climbed even higher. We were completely exposed to the sun, switch-backing our way across a gravel field. From behind, I enjoyed the view of Ian's tight ass and huge thighs bulging from his khaki shorts; his massive calves flexing and relaxing with each step. I certainly didn't have to encourage him to go any faster. He treated this strenuous hike up the rock face like a cardio workout.

About two-thirds of the way up we stopped for a drink of water, sweat pouring off our foreheads and soaking our shirts. We stripped off our packs and t-shirts and pulled out our water bottles. As we sat facing each other on our packs, I couldn't help but notice Ian had taken my advice and gone commando. His low-hanging balls and cock were clearly visible in his gaping shorts leg. We were sitting there quietly enjoying the sun when Ian suddenly sat up and asked, "Did you hear that? Down there in the trees, something is making a lot of noise." We stood and gazed down the side of the mountain into the forested area below. "There it is," Ian said excitedly, "looks like a deer or something."

"I don't see it, where are you looking?"

"Right there, just to the right of that big boulder," he said as he pointed down the side of the mountain.

"I'm sorry, I still don't see what you're talking about."

Ian stood behind me and wrapped his left arm around my chest, pulling my back in tight against his chest, then reached out over my shoulder with his right arm and pointed back down into the trees below. "See, right there, between that big boulder there and that bush with the fresh foliage." His face was right next to mine and the sweat from his chest and arms was mixing with my own. It was difficult for me to concentrate on the search, but I did and was rewarded with a sight I'd never seen in the wild. It was a bull elk mounting a cow. I explained to Ian that this was pretty rare. Rutting season was in the fall not the spring. In fact, the cows would have just had their offspring and there should be some newborns in the area. The bull had already started growing back his antlers, though they were short and still covered in velvet.

We stood there; Ian still wrapped around my shoulders, and watched this bull ravaging his mate. I felt like a voyeur, but between the sights below us and the heat from Ian's bare chest heaving against my sweaty back, I didn't want it to end. Even after I had indicated that I'd seen what he was pointing out, Ian didn't remove his arm from around my chest; his outstretched hand just dropped and gripped my right biceps. As the bull continued his assault, we were transfixed, completely wrapped up in the moment. The elk cow had had enough; she just started walking away as the bull struggled to stay mounted. Using his front hooves, he kicked and pulled as much as he could to stay mounted. Then he reached his climax, the cow suddenly stopped in her tracks and he threw his head back and trumpeted his obvious pleasure. A second later, they were nonchalantly roaming

through the brush. The cow shook her hindquarters and began foraging while the bull stuck his head into a bush and began thrashing his fresh antlers against the branches.

Ian and I just stood there in that position with him wrapped around my shoulders for what seemed like minutes but could only have been a couple seconds. And even when he released me from his grip, he slid his hands down my body and arms. My back felt cold as he peeled his chest off of me, our combined sweat exposed to the cool breeze.

"Wow!" Ian finally exclaimed, breaking the silence, "That was amazing. You say they don't mate in spring? What was that then?"

"That my friend was pure lust; pent up sexual tension being released."

"Did you see the power in his hind quarters as he drove in at the end? His muscles were all rippling and tense. Incredible!"

"Yeah, an amazing display of power and raw nature," I added, sounding like a documentary narrator, as I pulled on my t-shirt and backpack, hoping Ian didn't notice my semi-hard shaft tenting my cutoffs.

I led the rest of the way to the top of the ridge. We reached the pass summit shortly after noon and stopped for lunch.

"I can't believe this," Ian began, "We've only been on the trail, what? four hours, and I'm hooked. This is incredible, mating elk, intensive leg workout on the trail, and the view from here is just amazing." And it was. From our vantage point on this saddle between two peaks we could see all the way back down the mountain to the small parking area at the trailhead and in the other direction we could see our evening goal in the valley below. A small river roamed through the trees below and fell over a cliff below. The sky was crystal clear and intensely blue, much like Ian's eyes. We had packed a variety of smoked meats and cheeses for lunch. We sat for a half hour or so talking about what lay before us and some of my other hiking trips of the past.

"So, you wanna bag a peak while we're up here?" I suggested. "We can just leave our packs here and I think we have time to make it to that peak and back and still have time to get to our campsite before dark."

"Is it difficult? I've never done any mountain climbing."

"No, it's a pretty easy climb," I reassured. "We won't even need any equipment."

"I'm game, sure!"

With that, we stuffed the leftovers from lunch in our packs and headed up the ridgeline to the higher of the two peaks. It was an impressive trail along the ridgeline. The mountain fell away steeply on both sides of the narrow path. We weaved our way over and around the rocks and boulders that made up the peak, ultimately climbing to the top of the mountain, which consisted of a single large boulder. Mounted on this boulder was a small tin box with a registry card where we each signed our names and the date, memorializing our accomplishment. I stood at the edge of the rock and looked down to the valley below.

"You sure you want to do that?" Ian questioned, as he sat in the middle of this large, relatively flat boulder. "I mean, it looks like a long way down."

"The view is great from here. Come over and have look," I encouraged as I walked right up to the ledge.

"That's all right. The view from here is pretty good as well."

"But you can't see this lake from there."

Ian was clearly curious, but not enough to overcome his obvious fear of heights.

"Come on, crawl if you have to."

And he did. He got down on his stomach and scooted over and peered down into the valley. "Look at the color of that lake! It's like a jewel, deep blue in the center and aqua around the edge. Is that snow on the right over there?"

I sat down next to him and felt more content than I had in a long time. "Yeah, that's snow, surprised there isn't more." We sat there a good fifteen or twenty minutes, just taking in the view and soaking up the sun. But it couldn't last, we had to get back to our packs and reach our destination before dark.

Once we were down the mountain and back into the trees, it suddenly became very cool. We wound our way along the trail to the small river we could see from above then turned off the trail toward the small lake that served as its primary source. At the base of a small, eight foot or so, waterfall, we set up camp. I had camped here in the past and it was one of my favorite spots. A nice dry clearing next to the small pool at the base of the falls outlined by two large fallen trees. The logs provided seating as well as protection for the fire from any wind. I laid out my sleeping pad and bag as Ian just explored the area around the pond. I told him I was going to search for firewood.

When I returned, Ian had laid out his sleeping bag next to the other log with the opening facing the opening of mine; our heads would be right next to each other as we slept. I built a fire and told him I was going for a swim.

"Are you crazy? That water has got to be freezing. Didn't you see the snow around that lake?" he protested.

"I'll survive," I simply responded and stripped off the few articles of clothing I had on. Without hesitation I just ran straight into the pond and swam toward the falls. "Come and join me, it's great!"

Reluctantly, Ian stripped and inched his way into the pond.

"It's better if you just jump in all at once!" I called.

He backed away from the edge and took a running start and jumped in headfirst. When he came back up to the surface he yelled out at me, trying to be heard above the roar of the falls, "You could have told me it was warm!"

"Where would the fun in that be?" He swam over by me and I explained, "Just above the falls is a natural hot spring. It mixes with the cold water from the lake and comes out here like bath water."

I climbed up out of the pool of water and stood under the waterfall, allowing the water to flow over me like a giant shower. Ian swam up and stood there below me for a moment, just looking up at me then climbed up under the waterfall, standing next to me facing the rock wall. He leaned in and let the water massage over his shoulders and down his back. As he tried to turn around, he lost his footing and instinctively grabbed at me for support. I caught him by the hand, but his momentum was too great and he ended up pulling me down on top of him as he fell back into the pool. As we fell, he wrapped his arms around me in a frantic hug. We splashed down into the warm water and I buried my face in his chest and held on a little longer than necessary before we separated and came up laughing and splashing like a couple of teenagers.

"I'm going to go start dinner before it gets much darker," I suddenly announced. I was growing harder from the physical contact and wanted to calm down before Ian noticed. He returned to the falls and relaxed in the warm pounding water.

I had just pulled the steaks from the grill as Ian walked up, toweling his hair dry and completely naked. "Whoa, looks good!" he exclaimed as he eyed the steaks.

"That's what I was just thinking," laughing to myself at the double meaning. "I always bring fresh food for the first day or so. It's a little heavier, but worth the effort."

Ian pulled on a pair of sweats and a long sleeve t-shirt as I plated up the food. The sun had fully retreated behind the surrounding mountains and it had grown noticeably colder.

We sat, straddling one of the big logs, facing each other and laughed and talked over our dinner of grilled steaks, asparagus and brown rice. "This is the best!" Ian gushed.

"Everything tastes better on the trail," I responded dismissively. "It could be grilled cardboard and it would still taste good."

"Or it could be that you're just a great cook!"

After cleaning up from dinner and going through the get-ready-for-bed routine of brushing teeth, emptying bladders, hanging food in a nearby tree and gathering firewood, we returned to our sleeping bags. I stripped off my sweats pants and shirt and formed a pillow with them. Ian followed my lead and did the same. He practically stood over my head as he slid into his bag, his loose hanging balls dropped between those massive thighs and swung tantalizingly over my face. Sometimes, I think he does these things on purpose.

Laying there, facing up at the stars, Ian declared, "I've got something to tell you, but I'm not ready yet. But don't let this week end before I tell you, OK?"

"That's rather mysterious. Can't you at least give me a hint?"

"It's about Brenda. I've got some news to share with you, but I haven't sorted it all out for myself yet."

"Maybe it would help to talk it out," I suggested, dying from his vagueness.

"No, it's just something I need to work through. That's really why I jumped at the opportunity to come up here with you. I just needed to get out, away from the city, and think things out. Can you handle that? Just giving me some space to think things through?"

"Of course. Just let me know if I can help." I paused for a second before adding, "How are things going with Brenda? You haven't talked about her much lately."

"Now, see, there you go. That's what I need to work out. Believe me, I'll let you know when I know. Let's just change the subject."

I could hear a little irritation in Ian's voice and knew that I had better let it go and give him time. He'd never left me in the dark about anything with his relationship before, sometimes sharing much more than I cared to know. So there was no reason to be concerned I'd be left in the dark this time.

"Look at all those stars!" Ian had found a way to change the subject. "I've never seen so many! Sure makes you feel small, doesn't it?"

"Ian, I can't imagine anything making you feel small," I chuckled.

"Well, to be honest, this is the third time today I've felt small. First was being up on that mountain today, with you standing on the ledge and me crawling over like a little baby. What a little puss I am!"

"Oh come on! A lot of people have a fear of heights. And besides, I should have been more careful and respectful of your fear. Being on top of a mountain makes everyone feel small, so what was the other time?"

"This is embarrassing, but a little earlier while you were standing under the waterfall and I swam up. Standing up in the pool of water and looking up at you, I don't know, I just felt small in comparison."

"So you're saying anytime I'm standing up higher than you, you're going to feel small?"

"No, it's not that.... OK, it's like this. Standing below you like that, I was like right at eye level with your crotch. I...I guess it was the first time I'd really noticed, you know, how big you are. You know what I mean?"

"I'm only five foot eight. Sure, I've put on a respectable amount of muscle over the years we've known each other, but I can't see how I could make you feel small."

"Fuck, Seth, I'm talking about your cock!"

"Oh. That. Well you're not that much smaller than me."

"I don't think you have a realistic view of yourself," Ian retorted. We continued to talk about the stars a little before I realized I wasn't talking to anyone. Ian had fallen asleep and I wasn't far behind.

I woke to the smell of bacon and eggs cooking over a fire. I looked over and there was Ian with a roaring fire, breakfast cooked and freshly brewed coffee. "It's about time you woke up! I was just trying to figure out how I was going to keep all this warm without it going bad."

"What's this? I didn't know you could cook."

"I bet there's a lot about me you don't know. Now get up and go wash, I'll put the food on some plates."

I slid out of my sleeping bag and attempted to cover my half-hard morning bone as I grabbed my towel and headed off into the woods to piss it off. After a quick jump in the pond, I returned to the campfire with my towel wrapped around my waist. After last night's revelation from Ian, I felt self-conscious about my size.

"None of that around here!" Ian shouted as he grabbed my towel and snapped my ass with it.

"What are you doing?" I demanded as I tried to get away from another strike.

"No room for modesty out here," he said. "It's just us and if we can't be open about what we've got, well, it just wouldn't be right."

"Whatever! I need to put something on. It's cold. Besides, you're dressed."

I bent over and dug my sweats out of my sleeping bag. Sometime in the night they had ended up at the bottom near my feet. I could feel Ian watching me so I stretched down even further, my ass cheeks spreading slightly and my hamstrings flexing. If he wanted a lack of modesty, he was going to get a full view.

After pulling on my sweats and sandals, I returned to the fire and gathered up my plate of breakfast.

"Turkey bacon, six eggs each, only two yokes, and French press coffee," Ian announced breakfast like one of those cooking shows. "Man, you know how to pack. Bon appetit."

"Thanks, this looks -- and smells -- great. Don't get used to it though, we've just about run out of fresh food. Only freeze dried stuff after this."

"How far do we have to go today?" Ian asked.

"Actually not that far, ten, fifteen miles or so. We'll climb another pass and should be able to stop along a stream I know for lunch. We can hang out there for a couple hours before we need to head into the trees and set up camp."

"Is that stream heated by a hot spring as well?"

"No," I chuckled, "but it is completely exposed to the sun and the sand is black, so it shouldn't be too cold."

We finished breakfast, put out the fire, cleaned up and changed into our shorts before heading out on the trail. "Kind of sorry to leave this place," Ian said as we turned away from the pond and disappeared into the trees.

Because we were already at a pretty good elevation, we didn't have to climb as much as the day before to reach the top of the next pass. We didn't even stop at the top this time to catch our breath. We just took in the view of the two valleys on either side. Below was a black stream that wound its way aimlessly through a bright green valley before disappearing in a stand of trees.

We practically ran down the other side. Ian had the lead again and his quads ballooned under the load of his pack as he bounded down the trail. Once well into the valley, we veered off from the trail and found a grassy area next to the stream to drop our packs. The grass was a good four feet high and as we sat, leaning against our packs, it protected us from the cool breeze that was gently blowing through the valley. I stripped off my shirt and laid back on my pack and was soon fast asleep. When I woke, a short time later, Ian was gone. His pack was still there, but no trace of him. I got up and walked over to the three-foot deep stream. Even standing up, I couldn't see him anywhere. Then I noticed his shorts neatly stacked on his hiking boots at the creeks edge. He must have gotten in, I surmised.