

Solo Hike

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My tank was plastered to my back, and the sweat was still rolling off me. I was only a third of the way up the hill and already my thighs were screaming at me, begging for a respite, but none was forthcoming. Perhaps I was a bit masochistic; I had the odd habit of accelerating up the hills and then coasting down the opposite side.

My bright blue, twelve-speed Fugi street bike stayed in fifth gear as I pushed my legs harder, grateful once again for the toe clips. With only a third of the hill left, the mantra in my mind became, *'Come on, Lou. Push it. Almost there.'* Just as I topped the hill and started the descent, the support van honked as it came up to me. Steve slowed the sag wagon beside me and rolled the window down.

"Jeez, Steve, you scared me! Are you trying to kill me?" I shouted. He gave me his best raffish grin. "You're the last one in. I wanted to be sure you knew where to go."

My composure and wind quickly returned, "Yeah, yeah, you're always telling me where to go!"

He laughed. "This time you'll want to go where I tell you! You're almost there. Take the second right at the bottom of the hill, and you should see the cabin in about five miles to the left." Smiling, I waved my thanks and watched as the van sped by me to the bottom of the hill and turned off the road.

The push and pull motion of my legs was nearly hypnotic and felt really good. I wondered if this was what a runner's high was like. Knowing this was the last trip, my mind wandered over the events of the past two months. The summer camp wasn't my idea, but I'd had a great time so far. Like an Outward Bound program, the out-camping adventures were demanding and forced the participants to their limits, mind, body and spirit.

Our group of ten had become like an extended family, and I realized I would miss them when it was time to leave. Being physically strong was an asset in a program like this, so I was always included in various activities, but while I got along with everyone, I was not one of the more popular campers, especially with the boys. I was not pretty like the other girls. I was taller and more muscular than they were, though my build was lean. My eyes were blue, my skin pale, and I always suffered from the sun, burning then peeling like a molting snake.

Aside from my lack of popularity, I wondered if the boys could sense, on some level, I was competition. I got along well with all the girls, but what the girls didn't know was that while they watched the guys, I watched them. I didn't have anything against boys, but they didn't make my breath catch in my chest the way the girls did.

Still, they'd thrown an impromptu 16th birthday party for me in July. I was surprised and touched by the gesture, but I wasn't surprised that it was Lisa, one of the three girls in our group, who'd set the whole thing up. Whenever I thought about her my heart sped up, my tongue tied itself in knots, and my palms got damp.

It was easy to daydream while biking, and I'd thought a lot about Lisa in the last 350 miles. Genuinely kind-hearted and pretty, she was very popular with everyone, especially the boys. About three inches shorter than I, she had a toned body with soft

curves where I was hard muscle and angles. I loved how her tawny hair, golden in the sunlight, feathered perfectly over her brow and fell in soft waves to her shoulders. Her heart-shaped face was bronzed from the summer sun, her eyes were a gray-blue that changed with her moods, and her mouth was shaped like a bow, pale pink and so very kissable.

I'd often found myself staring at her lips. She caught me once, capturing my eyes as they devoured her face, and she smiled at me. A sweet, innocent smile that made me feel like a hungry wolf to her lamb. I was mortified. Still, I had a sense that Lisa was different with me than she was with everyone else. Of course, that was probably just my imagination working overtime again.

Thoughts shifting to the evening, I remembered that Steve mentioned a cabin. I was looking forward to seeing everyone, but my first priority was to take a shower. To put it bluntly, I stank. We all did. Our group had toiled up and down the hills in New Hampshire and Vermont, sleeping each of the last three nights in tents and drinking hot Jell-O for dinner because we were just too tired to do anything else. Roughing it was fine, but tonight I really wanted to go to bed clean!

I saw the van before I saw the cabin. As I slowed in the driveway, I could see four tents had already been set up. I was hoping we'd be sleeping in the cabin, but it appeared that was not part of the plan. Everyone waved as I pulled up the driveway. "About time you got here!" they teased. "We've been waiting over an hour!"

I stopped the bike and stepped off with rubbery legs. "I'm sorry, I broke my chain this morning, so I got behind schedule," I told them. "I really pushed hard to try to make it up." My legs were still wobbly as I walked the bike to where the rest were parked.

My friends Lisa and Annie came over to get the tent from my pannier. Lisa smiled at me and said, "Steve told us about your chain. He said you had it fixed before he found you. You did good, Lou."

Annie added, "Yeah, we really didn't expect you for another hour!"

I smiled tiredly. "Please tell me there's a shower with real hot water in the cabin." They both shook their heads. I was crushed.

It must have shown because Lisa immediately gave me a hug and said there was a lake a short walk from the campsite that I could take a dip in. "We all got to swim earlier," she said, "Go on and get cleaned up, you'll feel better; we'll set the tent up and get everything off your bike." Ever encouraging, Annie added, "Yeah, you look beat!"

"Thanks guys," I said, "I've just got to get clean tonight!" I dug in my pannier to find some clean clothes and a towel, found the energy for another smile and headed around the cabin to the trail.

The walk was peaceful. The tall pines were aromatic in the mid-August late afternoon sun, and I could hear birds hidden in their boughs. The carpet of pine needles beneath my feet muffled my steps so my approach to the lake was nearly silent. Rounding a bend in the trail, I saw the lake for the first time. It was perfect. A light breeze rippled the surface, but the blues and greens of the sky and the surrounding trees were still reflected. There was a hill on the far side that held the lake and made the setting somehow more private. The water looked so inviting, I couldn't wait to get in.

There was a boulder beside the shore, and I left my clean clothes and towel on it. Looking around to be certain I didn't have an audience, I started peeling off the

odious garments and dropped them in a pile at my feet. Naked, I hesitated for a moment at the edge wondering how cold the spring-fed lake would be. Surprised to find that the sun had warmed the water to a pleasant, cool temperature, I waded into the lake. As soon as I got waist deep, I slowly submerged my overheated, tired body. My nipples hardened when the water covered them; it was as if cool silk were caressing my skin, enfolding me in its embrace. Completely submerged, I started swimming.

I loved to swim. My mother was convinced I was part fish and still looked behind my ears for gills. I felt powerful in the water. Swimming was easy...relaxing and I was reveling in the sensuous feel of the water surging over my skin with each strong stroke. I'm not quite sure how long I was in the water, but when I started back toward the shore, I saw Lisa waving to me. Treading, with just my head and shoulders above the water, I waved back. Her expression softened, she smiled at me and said, "You're beautiful, like a mermaid." Her voice was soft, but it carried across the water, though I was sure she didn't mean for me to hear. She raised her voice. "If you want solid food, you'd better come out now!" She laughed, waved again, and left me to get dressed. At least I felt clean for the first time in a week!

I returned to find our tent up and my dinner in Lisa's hands. "I had to get a plate together for you before the guys ate everything in sight." She was smiling at me, and I thought I saw something else in her eyes as she gave me the food and sat down to keep me company. Beef stroganoff, potato salad, and baked beans, lots of carbs, I thought absently; they must still have some pretty demanding activities in store for us.

Honestly, I was so tired, it was all I could do to chew and swallow the food. Annie walked over to join us and handed me a brimming cup of hot, red liquid. "It's your favorite, raspberry." I took the cup gratefully and drank the Jell-O hoping for a surge of energy, but the surge only lasted long enough to take the plate to the trash, crawl into my sleeping bag, and fall into a void of dreamless sleep.

It was Lisa who woke me the next morning. She smiled at me. "Steve's leaving with the bikes, I thought you might want to say bye." I sat up and rubbed the sleep from my eyes. She burst out laughing. "You should see your hair!" My hands shot up to my head and, as I feared, my hair was standing on end. Even in the best circumstances my hair was a challenge. It was fairly short and thick, but very fine. I hated it. Somewhere between red and brown, it wasn't even a real color. Grumbling, I dug in my pack and found the baseball cap I kept for just such emergencies, jammed it on my head, and followed her out of the tent.

Steve shook my hand and told me how well I'd done yesterday not only in fixing my bike, but also in making up better than 30 minutes of time I'd lost while making the repair. As he got in the van and drove away, I watched my bright blue bike pass me with some nostalgia. For the last four days I thought it had become a most uncomfortable appendage. Actually, it was only the first two days that it was really painful; since then, we'd become good friends. I knew how it worked and what to expect from it; I'd even fixed it when it was broken. That was more than I could say about people. I was forever mystified by the way people acted. Every time I thought they'd do one thing, they'd do something else. I'd given up trying to figure them out and tended to keep to myself as a defense mechanism, to keep my secret safe.

The rest of the morning was pretty uneventful with wilderness survival lectures, first aid exercises, and a discussion about the wildlife indigenous to the area. We were all

attentive, but curious about where the discussion was leading. Shortly after lunch, we found out that we would be leaving in about an hour on solo hikes. We would only be allowed to take what we could carry. We were to hike a minimum of three miles, set up a camp, and stay until mid-morning the following day before returning to the cabin. I immediately thought of the hill I had seen on the far side of the lake.

Setting out an hour later, I skirted the edge of the lake until the hill loomed ahead of me. Chuckling to myself, I thought, *'At least I won't get lost on the return trip.'* With my camp set up in a small clearing near the top where there was a good view of the lake, I settled in wondering what I should do next. Hearing some noise coming toward me from above, I thought it was an animal and moved to the edge of the clearing to conceal myself in the brush. When Lisa came over the top of the hill, I was quickly relieved, surprised, and then nervous. We'd never had a chance to be alone, and I had no idea if she wanted to be. She stopped when she saw my sleeping bag on the ground cover. Her eyes scanned the area, searching for me. "Lou? Are you here?"

I stepped from the brush and walked toward her. "Hi. What are you doing here?"

"I followed you." She dropped her sleeping bag and took off her daypack. "The summer's almost over, and I wanted to talk with you, spend some time with you...alone." She blushed and looked at the ground between us.

"Really?" My heart soared.

Her eyes went from my feet, up my legs to the juncture between, then to my breasts and finally to my eyes. "Yes." Her smile was uncertain, but her eyes were hungry, imploring, begging me to respond to her.

My feet moved of their own accord toward her. Our eyes were locked, our breathing getting faster. I stopped a foot from her and reached out to cup her cheek in my hand. Her eyes fluttered shut as she turned her face into my hand and brushed those perfect lips gently against my palm. Taking the last step forward to bring our bodies together, she ran her hands over my back and around my shoulders, holding me. She tucked her face in the curve of my neck with a small sigh, and rested against me. My arms closed around her, pulling her quivering body even closer to mine.

Lifting her head from my neck, she looked first at my lips, then into my eyes. I barely heard her. "Please. Please kiss me." Unable to ignore her plea, my lips touched hers, and I was lost in her softness. My lips opened, my tongue grazing her lips, begging for entry. Her hands took my face and tilted it slightly, and then her mouth opened and received my seeking tongue. I caressed her tongue and explored her mouth thoroughly. Returning my caresses tentatively at first, Lisa then grew bolder, her kiss hot, wet and hungry. We broke the kiss to breathe. We had to. Both of our chests heaving, we stared into one another's eyes.

"I've never shared a kiss like that, Lou." Taking the lead she claimed my mouth with hers, nipping my lower lip then soothing it with soft strokes of her tongue. When my thigh slipped between her legs, she moaned into my mouth and molded the damp crotch of her shorts to me. The quality of her kisses changed then and she tasted me with purpose, as if she wanted to devour me.

This time, when she broke our kiss, she leaned back in my embrace, and panted, "I want...to stay with...you tonight!" Mind racing, heart thundering, and stomach suddenly churning, *'Could she possibly mean what I was thinking?'*

“Lisa, are you sure?” She didn’t hesitate for a moment, “Yes, I’m sure. I want to...be with you.” Her eyes closed and she whimpered when my thigh disengaged from her.

Taking a step back, and a deep breath, I looked at her, “It’s going to be dark soon, let me set up our camp.” I couldn’t believe what was happening. Needing a moment to collect my wits, to think about what to do next, I reached for her sleeping bag, and unrolled it. While I was doing that, Lisa had unzipped my bag and was waiting for me to do the same with hers. Her intention was unmistakable.

‘Oh my God! Could I do this? Do I know what to do? Have I read enough to pull this off?’ As if she sensed my doubts, she flashed a sexy smile at me, and helped me to zip her bag together with mine creating a soft, warm nest. The sun was about to set, and the sky looked as though it was on fire. The lake reflected the vibrant pinks, reds, oranges and yellows cast from above as we settled on our joined bags. Sitting between my legs, leaning back against my chest with my arms around her from behind, she held my hands and said, “This is nice. You picked a great spot.”

The dusk settled around us, the last light of the day waning. Lisa took my hands, placed them over her breasts, and then reached back to pull my head down to her waiting lips. My heart rate tripled when I felt her hard nipples straining against my fingers. Shifting slightly, I bent her body across my thigh so I could hold her while we kissed. I caressed her small, well-formed breasts through her shirt. She gasped when I gently pinched her nipples between my fingers.

When she opened her eyes, they looked unfocused and were a color I’d never seen before...darker, more gray than blue, like a storm about to be unleashed. Her lips were fuller, swollen from our kisses and had turned a raspberry color. She shifted again and lifted the shirt over her head and off her body. Thunderstruck, I watched as she turned, unhooked her bra and let it fall from her body.

She tucked her knees under her and raised herself to her knees while pulling my eager lips to her naked breast. Taking her in my mouth, I licked her turgid nipples. The texture of her flesh changed as my tongue raked over her aureole to the hardened tip. When I started sucking on them, they swelled even more in my mouth. I knew I was doing something right when Lisa laced her fingers in my hair and held me there. Her back arched, pressing her breasts harder into me, and she moaned, “Oh, yes. Yes, that’s so good. Oh God, so good!”

When her body started quivering in my arms, I left her breasts to kiss and lick my way up her chest, to her neck. Feeling her racing pulse beneath my lips, and her voice saying my name over and over, I thought my head would explode. I’d never felt this way before. Amazed, aroused and humbled, all I wanted was to give her pleasure.

Letting my tongue run the length of her throat to her ear lobe, I sucked it into my mouth. I pulled back, Lisa’s face was flushed, her eyes closed and her breath coming in shallow gasps. I took her mouth as passionately as I knew how and lowered us onto our soft nest. I was on top of her, still kissing her, when I felt her hands pulling my shirt up. She took it off me and then released my breasts.

It was wondrous; her caresses to my nipples fueled a fire starting deep inside me. She rolled us over when she felt my arms starting to shake and took the erect peaks of my breasts into her mouth. The wet heat of her mouth enclosing me was like an electric

current flowing through my body and I could feel myself getting wet. “Lisa,” I cried out, “please...I need you. I need to see you!”

The moon was waxing, nearly full, and bathed our bodies in a soft silvery light, enhancing our contours with shadows. She reached for my shorts as I unzipped hers and pushed them down her shapely legs. In my whole life, I don’t think I’d ever seen anything so beautiful as Lisa standing before me, naked in the moonlight. I knew I loved her in that moment and wanted to make love to her more than anything I’d ever wanted before.

Trying to convey to her everything I felt with my touch, I embraced her, feeling the full length of her nakedness pressed into mine, and kissed her with all of the tenderness and passion within me. Lowering her back to our bed, my thigh between hers again, I covered her face with kisses. “Lisa.” My throat was so tight I could barely speak. “I want to make love with you. Please, let me love you.”

“I want you, Lou,” she replied, her voice husky and low. “Touch me!”

The taste of her skin was exquisite as I descended. Suckling on her tender ear lobe made her body tense beneath me. Kissing and licking my way down her neck to the tender vee at its base, I felt her running her fingers through my hair to my shoulders, silently urging me lower.

Leaving open wet kisses on her chest, she guided me to her breast, crying out again when I closed on her swollen bud. Feasting at her breast, made my passion rise to a fever pitch. Her hands held my mouth to her and when she started to quiver, she again pushed me lower.

Following the nicely defined contour of her stomach with my lips and tongue, she spread her legs for me. I could see she was wet, her curls glistening. I couldn’t believe what she was offering me. *‘Please, God, let me do this right.’* I took a deep, steadying breath, and blew a stream of air onto her wetness. Her body shuddered. She reached for my face and pulled me down to her, “Lou, please...please, I need you. Take me now!” Her scent enveloped me, drawing me to her hot, wet center.

My hand shook as I opened her folds for my first loving taste. My tongue made a long, slow pass from her opening to the top of her clit. I continued to lick her, stroking her on either side of the swollen bundle of nerves until I felt her hands in my hair pulling me harder into her. When I finally took her clitoris between my lips and suckled her, she cried out again and her body convulsed. I could feel more of her wetness against my chin, and lapped it up. Wanting to fill her, I pushed my tongue into her as far as I could, but knew she needed more. When I gently placed two fingers against her opening, she surged against me, drawing my fingers deeply inside her. I withdrew and pressed into her again and again while beating her hard clit with my tongue. Her hips started rocking, creating a rhythm between us. I could feel her body closing around my fingers and spasming again. It radiated through her body like a wave while she cried out my name and her pleasure into the night.

It took me a moment to realize she was crying. Covering her body with my own, I saw a light in her eyes as well as tears. “Lisa? Are you all right? Did I hurt you?”

She smiled that sexy smile again at me and said, “I’ve wanted you all summer long. I knew you would be different, so good, tender and gentle. I wanted you to be the one, my first.”

She kissed me then, and rolled us over. Straddling my body, she explored my body with feather light touches that made me quiver in delight and anticipation. I was so excited, I could hardly breathe as her hands and then her lips went down my body. Stroking her hair and back as she ascended the swell of my breast to a hardened peak, I felt a flow of wetness soaking my thighs. Her tender lips assaulted my nipples relentlessly and I thought my heart would burst it was beating so fast and hard. Spreading my legs for her to settle, she continued her downward journey to my already twitching clit. All it would take was one touch and I knew I would come.

She opened my folds to look at me. "You're so beautiful, Lou," she whispered. "I had no idea how beautiful you would be." She looked up at me. "I want to be inside you."

Still breathless, I gasped, "Yes! Lisa, I want you so much...I'll die if you don't hurry!" She put her fingers into my untried opening just a little, tormenting me with sensation. When she took my clit in her hot, wet mouth, she pressed her fingers deep inside of me. I didn't feel any pain as the waves of orgasm exploded in me.

It was so different from any orgasm I'd had before. How could I know it would be so different with her fingers deep inside me, her lips encircling me. Just thinking about her making love to me caused the tidal wave of sensation to crash through me again. As if her fingers were white-hot, heating my core and tuning my blood into molten metal as it flowed throughout my body. My eyes tearing, a cry of exultation tore from my throat as the pleasure coursed through my body.

Gently withdrawing from me, Lisa pulled me into her arms while my body was still quivering. She held me tight against her, and I never wanted to move from her arms. I felt safe, warm and so loved; I couldn't stop my tears from falling. She didn't question, she just nestled me against her, stroking my hair and back, and placed light kisses on my head.

It took me a while to calm down, but when I pulled back to look into her eyes, I could see her soul. Everything was there for me to see, her hunger, her desire for me and her love. It was all right there in her eyes.

She kissed me again and smiled against my lips. "This is the best solo hike I've ever had." I had to agree as I melted into her body and kissed her, ready to love her again.