

The Day Laurel Went Viral - Leseprobe

The tip of northern Maine can be a chilly place in September, but this year was different. This year the area was having a brilliant Indian summer.

Enjoying the unusually warm weather, Laurel and her boyfriend David, both in their second year at Fort Kent High, were walking around the schoolyard during the morning break. David was excited. He was telling her about what happened on the weekend. The salmon were running on the St. John River and he and his dad had got up early Saturday morning and driven 10 miles down the river to one of the hot spots. Although they got there just after 5 o'clock, there were already several fishermen in the water. The two of them had just started fishing when one of the others hooked into something really big. Soon everyone stopped to watch. David and his dad watched, too, as the fish raced through the water, and then jumped high in the air. It was the largest salmon David had ever seen! The young fisherman was strong and he pulled with all of his strength. The fight went on and on, but in the end the salmon was stronger and broke the line! The young man just stood there, shaking his head in disappointment. David was disappointed, too. Watching him closely as he told the story, Laurel experienced a bright, warm feeling bubbling up inside her.

She smiled all over her face. She couldn't help it.

David looked at her. 'What are you so happy about?'

She felt her face grow warm. 'Uh, for the fish – the salmon – I'm glad it got away,' she said quickly.

'That's just like you.' He shook his head.

They walked on a few minutes in silence. Suddenly, he stopped beside an empty bench and took her hand. 'Okay with you if we sit a while?'

She noticed a change in his mood. 'Sure,' she said and sat down beside him.

He looked around the schoolyard, then said, 'You know what day Friday is, don't you?' He paused and gave her a bright smile.

'Duh,' she said, rolling her eyes.

'Okay, just checking. You asked me what would be a nice present, remember? Well, I've been thinking about it and I came up with a good idea.'

She shook her head. 'Too late,' she said. 'I've already got your present.'

'You've got my present?' His eyes went wide with surprise.

Poker-faced, she paused a moment, secretly enjoying her little joke. 'Just kidding, dude,' she said finally.

He only looked at her at first. After a while, he let out a dry laugh. 'I wish you wouldn't do that.'

'But it's why you like me, isn't it – my great sense of humor.'

He forced a smile and nodded slowly. 'Yeah, sure,' he said and fell silent.

'So are you going to tell me what your idea is?'

He studied her face for a moment before replying. 'All right, but no jokes this time, okay?'

Just then, several girls said hi to Laurel as they were going by. She looked up, smiled at them and said hello before turning back to David.

'Okay, no jokes,' she said.

'It's the perfect present.'

'Uh-oh! Sounds expensive.'

Grinning, David shook his head. 'Nope. Not at all.' Still grinning, he looked her in the eye. 'Just some photos, that's all. I'd like to take some photos of you.'

'Now you're joking. You can take photos of me any time, any day of the year. What kind of a birthday present is that?'

He continued to look her in the eye. 'Not any kind of photos. Special photos.' He gave her a knowing look and grinned some more.

'Are you thinking what I think you're thinking?'

Nodding, he let out a laugh. 'Right on, baby, some nice sexy photos.'

She moved back in her seat and gave him a sharp look.

'Hey, man, that's not cool! That's not my kind of thing and you know it! You can get photos like that – all you want – on the Internet, for God's sake!'

'I'm not interested in Internet photos. I want photos of you.'

'You've got lots of photos of me already!'

'Aw, come on, you know what I mean!'

'Yeah, that's the problem.'

Suddenly, a little toad came hopping out from under the bench. Laurel smiled as she watched it move slowly through the grass and stop a few feet away. David watched it, too, but then kicked at it, frightening it off.

'Did you have to do that?'

'Take it easy, it was only a toad.' He took her by the hand and moved closer to her.

'Listen, honey, about the photos: there's nothing to worry about. You come to my place and I take them in the privacy of my room. It'll be over in a few minutes. It's no big deal.'

'To me it *is* a big deal!' she said, her eyes flashing. 'It doesn't seem right to me. Can't you respect my feelings?'

'What about *my* feelings? Friday's my birthday, my seventeenth birthday. I know you want to give me a nice present. You asked me what I'd like to have. But when I tell you what it is I want, you back off and say no, no, I can't give you that. How do you think that makes me feel?'

She pulled her hand from his and ran her fingers through her hair.

David waited a moment, then began slowly. 'Is it about trust? You trust me, don't you? You don't think I would show the photos to anyone, do you?'

She looked around at the crowds of kids in the schoolyard before turning to face him again. 'It would just be between you and me? Nobody else?'

'Nobody else.'

'I, uh, don't know. You read all the time about girls who get in trouble that way.'

He shook his head. 'There won't be any trouble, believe me! This is between you and me!' He gave her a warm smile,

sensing that she was about to give in.

She nodded but said nothing.

The schoolyard was emptying quickly. He looked at his watch. In a few minutes the break would come to an end.

He took her hand again and looked her in the eye. 'So what do you say? Will you do it for me – for my birthday – please?'

She looked at him a long moment before speaking. 'Okay, all right, I'll do it – but I'm going to do it my way!'

'What does that mean?'

She gave him a little smile. 'It means I take the photos.'

'Aw, come on, honey. I –'

'Hey! You'll get your sexy pictures, okay? Don't worry about it.'

He forced a smile, then shrugged his shoulders. 'Yeah, sure,' he said finally. 'Why not? You take the photos.'

'And don't forget what you said. They are for you, and for you only!'

'You got my word on that. Cross my heart and hope to die!' he said with a little laugh. Then he got up quickly, pulled her up and together they hurried across the schoolyard. yard.