



Nice Shoes

A Short Story

By

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Nice Shoes! (Nearly a fishing story)

Bob helped the Russian couple on board as the Thai Captain revved the engine to give everyone an adequate sample of the diesel fumes that completely eliminated the fresh air that the guests were looking forward to on their day out. He shot the Captain a glance then motioned with his hand, telling him silently to stop so that they could board without suffocating. The Captain seemed to get the message as Bob eyed the pair of legs that were climbing over the stern, attached to the hand that he was holding. This girl was like a supermodel, dressed in a sheer little mini dress thing that barely covered her assets, displayed her long legs but allowed views of her breasts from the front, the side and even the back. Her long blonde hair was tied back at the nape of her neck and her face had to be an advertisement for one of the big cosmetics houses. The three-inch stiletto heels made her legs look even longer and Bob laughed inwardly, anticipating the day with a sense of dread. Nobody got on a fishing boat dressed like this.

She stood on the back deck, looking around her and turned to her husband. Her demeanour was obvious to anyone who cared to notice.

"This is what you've brought me to?" cried Maria angrily.

"It's a fishing boat my love, we're going fishing! I told you last night that you didn't have to come but you insisted," replied Mikhail.

"Where am I supposed to sit?"

"Anywhere you like my love," he answered patiently.

"Eh, Maria, you should take your shoes off," suggested Bob.

"Why?" she asked angrily.

"Well first of all your heels will damage the surface of the deck, and when we get underway you won't be able to stand or walk around in them. We always go barefoot," Bob explained.

"Where will I put them?" asked Maria.

Bob could think of a number of answers to the question but he slipped off his Crocs and laid them in the basket underneath the bench, hoping she would catch on. She looked into the basket to see the crew's footwear, the standard flip-flop of choice, old and dirty.

"I'm not putting my beautiful shoes in there!" cried Maria indignantly.

"It's okay, don't worry," answered Bob, "I'll get you a plastic bag to put them in."

"Thank you! At least someone is looking after me!" stated Maria, scowling at her husband.

"Okay guys, just a word before we get going," said Bob, opening his standard rhetoric for the day out.

"As you know my name is Bob and I'm your guide, here to help you catch fish and enjoy yourselves. There are lifejackets here and here, and in the event of an emergency follow the orders of the crew or myself. Nothing can happen, you're safe and this is just a precaution. There's no smoking inside the cabin and we'll get lunch ready for you around 12.30 pm. We can stop off at one of the islands and you can swim and snorkel if you like, you can see reef fish and the water is beautiful. If you'd rather just keep fishing, we can do that too, it's your choice. The other thing is the toilet. These boats don't have marine toilets so if you have to use the loo, just put a bucket of water down after it. Please put any paper in the bin, not in the toilet or it will block and overflow. Any trash, empty bottles or anything else goes in the bin here, not in the sea. That's it, any questions?"

"When's breakfast?" asked Maria.

"I'm sorry Maria, we don't do breakfasts on board, only lunch," replied Bob.

"What? I'm starving! Misha you said we would get breakfast," she complained angrily.

Bob walked into the cabin and spoke to the deck hand then opened the breakfast box from his wet bag.

"You're in luck Maria, today I brought some things with me to snack on, so you can have whatever you want from in here," offered Bob, peeling the lid off the plastic food container. "I've got some boiled eggs, ham and some chicken sausages, please help yourself," he said as he put the box down on the table. "Eek will cut some pineapple and watermelon for you, we can't have you going hungry."

"You're so kind, thank you so much," she answered, smiling at him.

"You are most welcome," said Bob.

Eek put out plates and dispensed the food from the box, peeling the eggs and cutting them in half, unwrapping the rest and laying it out buffet-style. Bob took half an egg and ate it and then helped Eek with the rods and began to prepare them for fishing. The boat chugged on at about four knots as he surveyed the landscape looking back at Phuket, the Big Buddha on top of the mountain and the total lack of clouds in the sky. It was going to be a hot day and he started on his routine. Sunblock was first. He covered all the exposed areas on his body, paying particular attention to his face and neck. He put on his cap and sunglasses and hung his fighting belt over the back of the chair. He looked at Maria intensively again and realised that it wasn't going to be the last time.

"Mikhail, it's 8.45 am and beer o'clock came early. Can I get you one?" asked Bob, opening the ice chest and pulling out a can.

"Thanks Bob, yes, great!" he replied as Bob passed him a can and took one for himself.

"Beer Misha? Really? You're drinking beer at this time in the morning?" chided Maria.

"It's pretty standard Maria, sorry. When we go fishing we have a few beers during the day. Would you like one? They're nice and cold," Bob offered.

"I don't drink beer! Have you got any white wine?" asked Maria.

"No, sorry. These boats don't carry alcohol so we all have to bring our own..."

"Do the crew not want a beer?" asked Mikhail.

"No, they don't drink, they're Moslems," replied Bob.

"What? Moslems? Oh my God! Are we safe? I mean, will they not rob us and kill us?" asked Maria seriously, in a state of panic.

"These are lovely people Maria, don't worry. They are Thai people, not terrorists or members of ISIS, it's okay, you'll get to know them. Eek here is a great lad and a very handy fisherman and the Captain is a quiet man but he knows his business and he'll take us to the fish. It's all fine Maria, don't worry relax! You're here to have fun. Have you ever fished before?"

"No," she said coldly.

"Would you like to learn?" he asked.

"I suppose so. There's nothing else to do, is there?"

"Not unless you brought your knitting," answered Bob.

"What is this word? I don't understand!" exclaimed Maria.

"Sorry, lost in translation, eh, look! I'll show you how the reel works and then you'll know what to do. So you sit in the chair and I'll pass the rod to you and put it here, in the holder. Then you wind the reel this way as you go forward then just pull back, then again, wind going forward, pull back! It's very easy. Hopefully we'll get into some tuna soon and you'll see. Then we can make some sashimi! It's the freshest fish you'll ever eat, straight from the sea and the boys will make up some wasabi and soy sauce, or lime if you want. It's great!" exclaimed Bob.

"Raw fish?" Maria questioned.

"Yes Maria, like sushi, you know?" added Mikhail.

"Oh yes, I like those little rolls," Maria replied gleefully.

"Great! Look the Captain's turned the boat to the East so he must know something! We'll be catching fish in no time, you'll see. So the lady gets in the chair first," stated Bob, fastening his belt around his waist.

"What's that for?" asked Maria.

"It's called a fighting belt. It means I can lift a rod and put the butt into this socket here and move around. The chair is really too small for me and I prefer being on my feet," explained Bob.

"That's very clever!" declared Maria.

"Yes, the simple things are usually the best. Listen Maria, do you have any sunblock?" asked Bob.

"No, I never bother with that," she replied.

"The sun gets very strong out here during the day and it also reflects off the water. You should be applying some or you'll burn," advised Bob.

"No, I won't. I tan very easily, it's no problem really!" Maria insisted.

"What about Misha?"

"He's darker skinned, it won't bother him either," she answered.

"Okay, if you're sure? There's nothing worse than being burned. I'm fair-skinned and I burn very easily so I always use a high factor cream. This stuff is thirty but I started with fifty before. You can use it if you want," Bob offered.

"You're very kind but honestly I don't need it," declared Maria.

Bob looked into the cabin to see Misha fast asleep, stretched out on the bench.

"So where have you been so far?" asked Bob.

"We went to a club last night it was awful," she replied

"I see. Have you been to see any of the sights?"

"No, we tend to sleep in the day. This is the first time I've seen a morning!" she said, laughing.

"So this is the first time you've been to Thailand?"

"Yes, we went to Bali last year, it was pretty boring..."

"Where are you from?" he asked.

"Moscow," she answered but he already knew. Her clothes but more specifically her shoes had already told him that. She lived in the city, it was obvious. Everything about her said she was from the Russian Capital. He smiled and thought Ferrari, high maintenance.

He wasn't surprised by their lack of activity, they had come to Phuket for the usual reasons, to drink until they couldn't drink any more, to smoke a bit of the local produce and laze around by the pool then go clubbing. The beauty and culture of Thailand didn't matter to the average tourist and visiting any local attractions wasn't high on their list of priorities. If the tourists were male, they had come here for the same reasons, but in addition they would be serious about getting to know some of the local girls who were specially imported from the north of Thailand, just for them.

"Zzzzzzt!" came the sound of the ratchet on one of the port side reels.

"Fish on!" shouted Bob as the Captain cut the engine.

"Here we go Maria, in the chair! Quickly!" said Bob as he picked up the rod and adjusted the clutch on the reel to tighten the tension. He lifted the rod gently and wound a few turns and then turned to her.

"Now! I'm going to say something to you that no man has ever said to you before," said Bob.

"What's that?" she asked.

"Open your legs," he said smiling, as he wound the handle another few turns.

She laughed and opened her legs to reveal the rod holder and he pushed the rod down into it and turned it slightly to lock it into position.

"Now, left hand here, right hand winds. Go!" he cried, "Wind going down, pull back! That's it! Great! Keep going! Wind going down, pull back!"

He watched as she followed his instructions and he looked over the stern to see the progress.

"Tuna! Maybe two or three! Is it hard to pull back?" asked Bob.

"Yes! It's very hard!" cried Maria.

"Keep going! You've got it! Well done!" he said, laughing as he watched her.

It occurred to him that as a spectator sport, this was second to none. He had to tell himself to concentrate as Eek ran out onto the tailboard and grabbed the line and handed the first fish to him, then took the second one himself, holding the tuna by the gills and taking the hook out.

"Sam pla!" cried Eek.

"Great! You got three of them!" cried Bob as he opened the box and dropped the tuna inside then took the other one from Eek and did the same. The third fish was much bigger than the first two and Eek passed it to Bob as he deployed the line again and the Captain started to move the boat forward.

"This is a beauty! Six kilos I would guess!" commented Bob as he dropped it into the box.

"Is that it?" asked Maria.

"Yes, easy, isn't it?"

"That was great!" exclaimed Maria, giggling with delight. "More! Let's do that again!"

Bob laughed and looked at her. It was the first time she had smiled today and the potential for a good day out just improved in leaps and bounds. Mikhail had missed the whole thing, he was still fast asleep. Eek gave Bob the customary "high-five" then did the same with Maria.

"You good fish lay-dee!" exclaimed Eek.

"Thank you Eek! Thank you for your help," replied Maria, smiling again.

"So what time did you leave the nightclub?" asked Bob.

"Around four-thirty," said Maria.

"You seem okay but I'm afraid Misha's the worse for wear," stated Bob.

"He drinks too much. I think I had three glasses of wine all night," she remarked

Bob opened the beer chest and pulled one out and opened it. He looked at the plates on the table and a solitary slice of ham remained. That went down well, he thought as he ate it then stacked the plates.

"Maria, I hate to be a bore but you're looking pretty red. You should put some lotion on yourself before you burn. Please, it really hurts and it can ruin your holiday," Bob advised again.

"You're right, I feel very hot," Maria agreed.

"Good girl. Look, here you are, use this," said Bob, handing her the bottle.

Most people in this situation would refuse. Once they had made a decision not to, they usually stuck to it and got burned. By the time the boat docked back at the pier they would be dehydrated, very hot and burnt red raw. When they woke up the next day they would walk into the shower then scream in agony as the water pressure told them about the pain. Sunburn! Then it was a case of getting to the pharmacy to purchase the biggest tube of Aloe Vera possible, slapping it on all over and moaning for two or three days at least. Bravado is very easy, and pride comes before a fall, every time.

Bob watched as she spread the white lotion over her body and she turned to him and saw that he was watching.

"You're enjoying this aren't you?" she asked.

"If I said no would you believe me?" asked Bob.

"No, of course not!" she replied, laughing. "Do my back?"

"With pleasure Ma'am," he answered as he went into the ice chest again and pulled out a bottle of water and handed it to her.

"Thanks," she replied as she turned her back on him and he started to deploy the lotion.

"Nice, you have soft hands," she commented.

He wanted to pay her a compliment in return but the words wouldn't come to him. He was completely taken up with the job in hand and he blessed the designer of this flimsy item of clothing for his ingenuity. It had to be a man. A woman could never have designed something like this. There was no back on this dress, it started below her waist and simple ties around her neck held up the front.

"Zzzzzzt! Zzzzzzt!" cried the starboard reel with the *Rapala* on it.

"Damn!" cried Bob unconsciously. "Fish on!"

Maria laughed as he got up and grabbed the rod and put it in his belt. The Captain cut the engine again and the boat stopped.

"Dorado!" shouted Eek.

"Yeah buddy, I see him? Dammit! He's a lively one! Maria! In the chair, quickly! I'll pass this to you in a moment," exclaimed Bob.

She moved across into the chair and sat and watched as the fish cleared the surface of the sea and leapt into the air.

"It's huge! Wow! Look at that!" she screamed. "It's like a rainbow!"

"Yes, they're amazing colours and the best eating! Well, in my opinion anyway, here he goes!" cried Bob as the fish took a dive and tried to run. He slackened the clutch slightly and allowed the fish some play on the line then started to wind him back in.

"Okay! Now he's yours!" cried Bob as he put the rod into the holder. "Same as before! Wind going down then pull back! Get him!"

She chuckled with delight as she pulled back on the rod and discovered the weight of the fish she was fighting.

"Doin' great girl! Put your left hand further up the rod, it gives you more pulling power," advised Bob.

"Oh yes, yes, I see what you mean!" replied Maria as she pulled on the fish.

The Dorado clearly wasn't happy, but who would be if they had two big treble hooks stuck in them? He turned against the lure and leapt into the air again trying to escape but Maria did a good job of keeping him heading straight towards the boat with the rod, as she continued to wind and pull.

"Whew! This is quite difficult," Maria remarked, as she tried to see the fish in the water.

"You're doing great! Stay with it! Keep the tension on him," exclaimed Bob. "He's a fighter!"

"This is amazing!" she yelled, laughing with delight. "Wait 'til I tell Mama about this!"

"We need to get some photos for you to show her," confirmed Bob, smiling. "Keep going Maria, still quite a way to go yet, that's it!"

The fish started to come nearer to the boat as Eek grabbed the gaff and moved to the back corner of the deck and waited as Bob smiled and watched her. The front of her dress had moved to the right and her left breast had popped out. She didn't care. She kept going, winding and pulling until the Dorado was almost at the tailboard.

"Go get him Eek!" cried Bob.

The front of her dress had moved again and now both breasts were clearly visible. The wonders that Mother Nature provides, he thought as his eyes feasted on her delights.

"Go get him Eek!" Bob yelled again, laughing.

He looked at her again and the same smile beamed across her face as she continued to fight the thrashings and indignant resistance that the fish was trying to use as a means of escape. The lure was firmly lodged in his mouth and Eek stuck the big hook of the gaff into the fish just behind his head then turned and dropped him on the deck at her feet. Bob put his foot across the Dorado's gills to hold him steady as Eek removed the *Rapala* and handed the gaff to Bob.

"Wow! Amazing!" cried Maria, with both breasts still uncovered.

"Can't argue with that!" Bob agreed.

"So what happens now?" asked Maria.

"Could you open the box for me?" said Bob as Eek took the rod from her.

Bob dropped the big fish into the box and turned the gaff to release it.

"Now that... is fishing!" confirmed Bob. "Good job Maria, well done! It just doesn't get much better than this. Has to be about twelve?"

"Fifteen Sir," argued Eek.

"You think so?" asked Bob.

"Yes Sir!" exclaimed Eek.

"Then we'll take your word for it!" replied Bob, laughing. "Now, where was I?"

"You were putting suntan lotion on my back," answered Maria.
"Was I? Oh yes, that's right!"

She had made no effort whatsoever to cover herself and he finished spreading the sunscreen across her back.

"Stand up and I'll do the back of your legs for you," Bob offered.

"Thanks Bob, great," she answered as he loaded his hands and went to work, making sure he didn't miss anywhere.

"I'll do these, if you don't mind?" said Maria as she started to apply the lotion to her chest and her arms. Her dress was getting in the way so she untied the straps behind her neck and it fell down in front of her as she rubbed all over her breasts and down over her belly.

Bob lit a cigarette in despair and went back to the ice chest for another beer. The day was taking shape perfectly and her shape was more than perfect, it was incredible.

"I don't have a change of clothes," she mused.

"Big T-shirt?" he asked.

"No, I never brought anything," she said.

He opened his bag and handed her his spare t-shirt then looked at her as she held it up.

"It's big enough to be a dress!" she cried, laughing as she dropped her dress onto the deck displaying her body with pride. Her little black panties were all that remained as she pulled the t-shirt over her head. It covered her to just below her behind and she spun around as if she was modelling it on a catwalk.

"Ahh! You're a model!" he exclaimed.

"Very good Bob! How did you guess?" asked Maria.

"I think it was when I first saw your nice shoes..."

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