

Snow Bunny

Synopsis: Traveling alone on what was supposed to be a ski trip with her best friend, a young woman has an embarrassing brush with security, but could a chance encounter spark a new romance?

This ski trip was supposed to be a girls-only, challenge yourself getaway.

“It says here,” Andrea said, peering over the pages of her latest self-help book, “you should do one thing each day that challenges you.”

“Sounds painful. What if I don’t want to challenge myself every day for the rest of my life?”

“Come on Brenda, I’m serious, there’s more to life than sitting around this apartment all day.”

“Okay, what exactly do you suggest we tick off this imaginary bucket list then?”

“I don’t know, how about skiing?”

“Skiing? Are you serious? I can barely walk in heels, let alone with two colossal skis strapped to my ankles.”

“Come on Bren, we can book tickets, make it a girls’ week away. You never know, we might even meet a couple of cute guys. Imagine...après ski in the Italian alps?”

So we did, at least until Andrea sprained her ankle at Pilates class two days before we were due to leave.

So, with non-refundable tickets, this is how I find myself standing in a long queue, dressed from head to toe in bulky snow clothes, skis in hand, inching forward toward the x-ray machine guarding the entrance to the cable car that’s taking us would be snow bunnies to the top of the Tyrolean Alps. Yes, in this post-terrorism world, even the ski cable car needs burdensome security. Fortunately, I manage to pass the time by staring at the delightfully taught rear of the cute Italian hunk in front of me.

We inch closer to the x-ray station and I stumble, trying to lug my bag along with my ski gear. How do real skiers manage this? I topple over, knocking into the hunk from behind.

“I’m so sorry,” I blurt out, already feeling my face growing hot despite the freezing air.

He turns and smiles. “No problem.”

I flail around trying to gather my things while struggling with a bloated puffer jacket. I feel like a female version of the Michelin man.

“Here,” he extends a hand, “let me help”.

“I’m so sorry,” I repeat. “It’s just all this gear.”

“First time?”

“Yeah,” I reply sheepishly. “How’d you guess?”

“Let’s just say...you seem prepared for any eventuality.” He holds out his hand, “Luca.”

I remove an oversized glove and shake his hand. His fingers envelop mine, and I’m immediately aware of his warm firm grip...and a distinct lack of rings.

“Brenda,” I manage eventually. “I guess the security flustered me too.” I nod toward the x-ray machine where they’re checking people’s bags before they board the cable car.

“Security can be pretty excessive until it’s not enough right? But you get used to it.”

“Does that mean you come here often?”

“You could say that,” he replies. “I’m an instructor here.”

“Oh,” was all I can stammer before we’re both waved forward to pass our bags through the scanner.

He places a small shoulder bag onto the steel rollers and his wallet into one of the little plastic bins.

Meanwhile, I shrug my enormous backpack off my shoulders and heave it along with my skis over to the official in uniform passing items along the conveyor.

Luca breezes through the rectangular metal detector and begins collecting his things from the other side.

I follow, half expecting an alarm to sound, but breathe a sigh of relief when it doesn’t and I find myself once more standing next to Luca waiting for my gear to pass through the x-ray.

“Well, it was nice to meet you, Brenda.”

“You too,” I smile. He starts to walk away when a voice from behind us makes us both stop.

“Ahem, excuse me, Miss,” says one of the uniformed officers. Both are busily studying a printout in front of them, assessing something in the x-ray photograph.

“Is there a problem?”

“There seems to be something...unusual, in your luggage.”

“I don’t understand?”

By now Luca has stopped and is watching as the two security officers point at the screen in front of them.

“There seems to be something in your luggage.”

“Yes, I know, you just said that,” I reply, wracking my brain to think what I’d packed the night before which might be of concern to a cable car security officer.

“Is there anything you can think of, that would be cylindrical, about six or seven inches in length?”

I shake my head.

“Are you sure?”

By now Luca has returned to where I’m standing. “Is everything okay?”

“Yes,” I say. “It’s just these officers seem to think there’s something unusual in my bag.”

He looks at the security men.

“Ma’am? You’re sure you don’t remember packing any tubular item, about so big?” He says, making an awkward gesture with both his hands.

Luca looks at me and raises an eyebrow. That’s when I remember.

“Oh...but that’s just for my personal use. Surely that’s okay?”

“Miss, I’m afraid you’re going to have to open your bag and remove the item for us to see.”

My face starts to flush again. “Surely there’s nothing wrong with carrying your own...”

“Miss? The bag please?”

I unzip the backpack reach in and retrieved the offending item.

“Here,” I say, holding it up. “See? Satisfied?”

“It’s a drink bottle?”

“Yes, it’s a drink bottle. Is that a problem?” I go to return the bottle to my bag, the water inside having long since frozen while we’d been standing in the queue outside.

“Miss, you’re not allowed to carry more than two hundred and fifty milliliters of liquid in your luggage.”

Luca interjects. “Well, technically seeing as it’s frozen, the contents aren’t a liquid are they?”

The two men exchange glances. “Very well,” the closer of the two announces. “You’re free to go Miss.”

I face Luca, “Thank you. You didn’t have to do that.”

“I’m just glad I could help. Perhaps I could buy you a drink later,” he says. “To replace the one that’s frozen in your bag?”

I smile. “I think I’d like that.”