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Laura Remmerde

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Now, Everybody Will Want One

Jon and I were on one of our very rare "dates." I say dates in quotes, because I found out early in our relationship that a date with Jon was a little different from the more traditional dating that I had been accustomed to. Jon's dates always had to have a purpose, it seemed. I remember one "date" when we went out to a friend's farm to get manure to use as fertilizer for the garden. Another one involved a trip to the office supply store for typing paper. You get the drift.

It took me a while, but I finally realized that the "diamonds, roses, and candlelight" pictures I had gazed fondly at in magazines when I was growing up just didn't have a place in our relationship. My husband is a mountain man at heart. His idea of a concert date, for instance, is "Opera of the Loons," or perhaps "Moonlight Sonata on Skis."

On this special occasion, we were on the side of a mountain picking huckleberries so Jon's mom could make her famous huckleberry pie. Now this actually seemed more like a real date to me than some of the other excursions we had been on.

For one thing, we were not raking manure. For another, while we were not surrounded by roses, there were bushels of beautiful purple huckleberries. We were alone. Our daughters were at their grandma's house, eagerly awaiting the results of our berry-picking efforts.

In order to understand how special it was to be alone together, you should know that, as a home-schooling mom in an isolated area of northeastern Oregon, I spent every waking hour with our daughters. Being alone with Jon on any kind of date was rare. I was savoring the quiet, the companionship, and a few berries, too.

There was only one problem. I really didn't want our date to end, but I was getting cold. Though it was summertime, it was shady and cool on the mountain. I had dressed for the warmth in the valley, not for the coolness of the mountaintop. Jon seemed to have had more foresight. He was busy picking berries and eating as he went, oblivious to the cold. I reluctantly told him my problem, indicating that, although I did not want to leave just yet, I couldn't stay much longer because of the cold.

Jon began folding a cuff around the edge of a brown paper bag he was carrying. "Most of your body heat escapes from the top of your head," he said, placing the paper hat on my head as if it were a crown.

It fit perfectly. I thought it must have looked ridiculous. But then, besides Jon, who was looking? And by the look on his face, I could tell he thought it looked pretty fine.

I felt warm enough after that. We went back to berry picking and eating, and soon we had enough for the promised pie. I took off the hat before we entered town again. That hat was just between Jon and me. I expect, however, that now that I've told the story, everyone will want one.