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Fiction

### **LYUDMILA'S ALLIGATOR**

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By

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Lyudmila had only been in the United States for a short time when she started thinking in terms of seeing an alligator for the first time. This was only natural, after all in Florida, all anyone ever talks about are the resident alligators.



We do have a bunch of them. I decided to make a day of it and take my lovely bride to a

local nature park and introduce her to a real live alligator.

Fortunately, there is a nature preserve only about fifty miles from Perry and the park is reported to have a great number of nice big alligators.

Lyudmila was very excited about this trip and she seemed to be of the opinion all she need do was to lean over and pick up a friendly, “Haroshinki” (means; small, cute, pretty, nice, etc. in Russian) alligator and it would be her friend.

Naturally, being somewhat mean spirited, I encouraged this belief. Her son and I teased her about her catching an alligator and making an alligator hand bag or shoes out of it.

The day we set out for the nature park was a near perfect early fall day. The weather was warm but the insect population was already rapidly disappearing to hibernate for the frigid Florida winter. The sky was free of clouds and there was a gentle breeze wafting through the trees. What else might one expect of a Perry, Florida, day?

We arrived at the park around noon and drove around trying to find a nice haroshinki alligator for Lyudmila to play with. There was also the possibility she might want alligator shoes if she could find an alligator large enough. I was of the opinion, she intended to jump into the water and catch one.

It wasn't long before we happened upon a small lake. Out in the middle of the lake was a nice sized alligator. Lyudmila was ecstatic about the find. She immediately began talking about wading out into the lake catch it. If I hadn't restrained her she might just have tried.

Now, however, she had a new idea. She was going to coax the alligator out of the water and have it follow us home where she could deal with it on her terms.

We had already eaten alligator tail at a local restaurant and she thought it was quite tasty, now she wanted an alligator skin to play with after eating it.

So long as she didn't go out into the water after the thing, what harm could there be in letting her try to coax it out of the water.

I found a bench in a shady spot and sat back to watch the fun. Lyudmila stood on a small wooden platform over the lake and began talking to her haroshinki alligator in Russian.

I had seen this happen with our cat. The results were spectacular. The cat did exactly as she told it to do. Now as I watched in total amazement, the alligator turned and slowly but very deliberately started swimming toward the platform where Lyudmila stood speaking to it.

This was rapidly getting out of control. I raced to the platform and took Lyudmila by the hand. I tried my best to explain about how some alligators eat people but Lyudmila was convinced she had found her very own haroshinki alligator.

As the alligator approached the shore I managed to get my lovely wife to retreat in the direction of the car.

The alligator emerged from the water and followed us as we retreated for the comparative safety of the car. This critter was at least ten feet long and it was not intent on following us.

Lyudmila was all set to open the back door of the car and invite this huge reptile to ride in the car with us.

When I absolutely refused to let the alligator into the car with us, Lyudmila got angry. She insisted on leaving the car and letting the alligator follow her back to the park office.

I had told her the rangers at the park might frown on someone taking an alligator home with them. She would not be dissuaded.

Without another word to me, she set out through the woods with her haroshinki alligator

a few yards behind her. She spoke to the alligator in Russian the whole time.

There was nothing I could do to stop this without resorting to physical force so I let her do it her way. In between speaking to the alligator in Russian, she kept telling me the alligator was her friend and no harm would come to her.

With a wave of her hand she vanished into the woods, the alligator still following a few yards behind her. She had indeed made a pet of the thing.

Fearing the worst might happen when the park rangers saw a live alligator following



someone out of the swamps, I raced to the ranger station to alert them about what was going on.

They looked at me with incredulous expressions on their faces. One of them muttered, “You’re either hallucinating or your wife is now part of an alligator.”

Once again, I assured them I was not hallucinating and pointed to the trail I expected Lyudmila and her alligator to emerge from. The rangers and I stood waiting for Lyudmila with breathless anticipation.

There was no sound from the woods except the chirping of some birds. We waited and watched for some sign, any sign. It was only minutes but it seemed like hours went by.

I knew what was going on, but the park rangers were nervous as long tailed cats in a room full of rocking chairs. One of the rangers stepped into a back room and reappeared with a big dart gun and a hand full of tranquilizer darts.

They were just about ready to bolt from the ranger station on a rescue mission, in spite of my telling them everything was going to be okay. It was rapidly becoming a very tense situation.

Just about this time we heard someone talking out in the swamps. We couldn't hear exactly what was being said but I recognized the voice. I pointed in the direction of the voice and said, "That's Lyudmila. She's okay and she's still talking to the alligator."

The chief ranger looked at me with a strange expression on his face and said, "You have got to be kidding us! No one talks to alligators. They're mean, vicious and the big ones eat people."



Then, Lyudmila made her appearance, the alligator still some few yards behind her. She was smiling like a conquering hero and speaking to the alligator in Russian. She led her haroshinki alligator across a grassy field and up to the park ranger station.

The rangers stood guns drawn and ashen faced watching my pretty Lyudmila lead a ten

foot long alligator, like a pet dog, toward their station. I had seen my pretty wife do things like this before but the poor rangers were horrified.

When she got up to where we stood she stopped. The alligator also stopped a few feet behind her. It seemed to be waiting for more instructions. Lyudmila smiled and asked, "I can keep alligator?"

There was a long stony silence before one of the Rangers said, "Sorry, we can't let you take it home with you. You are, however, welcome to come back and visit any time you want."

We moved on into the building, the alligator not far behind and continued the discussion about taking the alligator home. At long last Lyudmila was convinced the alligator would not be allowed to leave the park. She had the alligator climb up onto a display stand and I took her picture with her new found friend.

Shortly thereafter we left for home again. I could swear there were tears in the eyes of both the alligator and my pretty wife. The Rangers on the other hand were beginning to be a bit concerned about how they were going to get the alligator to leave the building. The alligator seemed quite content sitting there in the display and seemed to have no intention of moving.