

Girls Selling Fireworks

On a recent road trip to Canada, I discovered a most unusual business in Oregon. Fireworks. I'm not talking about the stands they have in other states, where you can pick up some sparklers, firecrackers and bottle rockets. No, in Oregon they have thrown out the public safety ordinances cities usually impose on explosives. In fact, they seem to embrace it. Huge tents, the size of a Ringling Brother's circus, house millions of implements of destruction from the iconic firecracker to something comparable to C4, napalm and nuclear missiles.

But the most intriguing aspect of this free-for-all business was that for the most part, these huge tents are manned (uh, womaned?) by teenage girls; school clubs, sports teams, cheerleaders; all the kids who used to hold car washes and bake sales were now selling the second most desired commodity known to modern man, not to mention teenage boys. Apparently, the profit margin is higher on weapons of mass destruction than the cost of soap, water and baking ingredients would allow.

Kelly, the captain of the local high school tennis team, and her teammates were one of twelve such groups inside the 3000 square feet of tent space, just outside Portland on the Saturday before the Fourth of July. They were dressed in their tennis uniforms, ivory white with red trim and matching socks and sneakers, oddly reminiscent of the USC song girls. Other groups of girls there included the yearbook staff, the school band, the field hockey team, the book club, the volleyball and basketball teams, the French club and the school library volunteers, all raising money for some trip the following year.

Kelly was dating David, the captain of the boy's tennis team. David used to visit the tent, along with every other male in a ten-mile radius, not to buy, but to chat with his beloved girlfriend of three years.

"Hi Kelly" he said.

"Hi sweetheart. I was hoping you would stop by. Keep some of these creepy old men from hanging around our booth."

"Well, you have the most beautiful girls here, except for maybe the French club."

Kelly punched him lightly in the arm. "French club, huh?"

"Just kidding" David said as he smiled. "You know I only have eyes for you" as he glanced over to the French club girl holding the four-foot rocket with skull and crossbones and large red print warnings and disclaimers about lost appendages and eyesight.

"You better, or you can find another girl at Cal next year; I'll take that Stanford spot."

“Heck, no. We’d be rivals and have to sneak around. I can’t wait to get to Berkeley with you. By the way, did you hear from the Cal coach about making the team?”

“She sent me a letter inviting me to try out this summer. Everyone who makes the team gets a scholarship. But she hinted that she couldn’t imagine my not making it.”

“Great. Wish I was as lucky. Apparently, California has a lot of great boy tennis players from Socal locking up the scholarships, but I did get an invitation to try out for the freshman team.”

“You’ll make it David. You won the high school state singles title. Besides, you have me as a training partner” and she laughed. Mike acknowledged the jibe.

“I have to go run some errands for my folks. Are we still on for burgers and a movie tonight?”

“Sure, looking forward to it. Pick me up at my house at seven.” She leaned over and kissed David on the lips. David just smiled and winked as he left the tent and passed the ambulance outside handing out safety flyers for using fireworks.

That evening David and Kelly cuddled in their car at the drive-in, almost watching the double feature of scary teenage movies, taking just enough time away from kissing to glance at the movie and eat snacks when they were interrupted by a loud bang at the side of the car. Outside was the culprit, Mike, linebacker from the football team. David was first to react.

“Damn Mike, you scared the shit out of us.”

“Just messin with you guys. You’re my favorite non-sports couple. I saw you on my way back from the snack bar.”

“Well you can keep on walking,” said Kelly. “The movie is scary enough.”

“Aw, hear that David. She thinks I’m scary.” Mike made a monstrous face and left.

“What an asshole” said David. “Are you OK?”

“Yeah, I’m OK. Wonder what college he’s going to?”

“It won’t be on his academics, that’s for sure. But his football skills should get him in somewhere. I heard U. of O.”

“Another obnoxious duck. He’ll fit right in.” Kelly noticed that Mike’s car was far ahead of theirs, in the front row next to the big screen, so they shouldn’t be interrupted again. “Is he still dating Lynn?”

“I think so. Thought she had better taste than that. She’s in the French club, you know.” David knew this would get him in trouble but couldn’t resist.

Kelly play pounded him again and they fell into each other’s arms kissing.

Kelly saw Lynn walk past their car to the bathroom. “Hey Kelly” Lynn said.

“Hi Lynn. You heard from your applications yet?”

Lynn was smiling. “Yes, I got into UCLA, my first choice. You guys are going to Cal, right?”

David and Kelly both clapped. “Yes, but I’m glad you’ll be in California too. We might see you at a game or tennis match.”

“I’d like that guys. I’m breaking up with Mike tonight. Thought this was just public enough to keep him from getting crazy.”

“Well if he acts up, come back to us and we’ll give you a ride home.”

“Thanks guys. See you later.”

Between features, they showed those awful commercials with dancing food at the snack bar; now all the cars were filled with teenagers making out, having no reason to look up. That is until they heard a loud explosion. Kelly saw Lynn running back to their car.

“What happened?” Kelly said to Lynn.

“When I broke up with Mike, he went nuts. Pulled out some huge explosive and set it off in front of the car. Unfortunately, it shot back into his grill and now his whole car is on fire.”

David opened the door and let Lynn in. “C’mon. We’ll take you home. You don’t need to be around him tonight.”

“Thanks guys.” Kelly sat in the back seat comforting Lynn. David could see them in the rear view mirror, now imagining how it would be with both of these girls together. *Fireworks*, he thought and was smiling all the way home.