

D.U.A.

Living on a Farm in Stryker, Ohio can be a very exciting experience...that is, if you get a rush out of watching cows munch on ankle-high green grass and you enjoy slapping at menacing mosquitoes trying to suck you bone dry. Let's face it, Stryker is a far cry from the teeming metropolises of New York, Toledo, Provo and Huntsville. This was a prominent problem for the little Omish settlement and especially the new and upcoming generation already use to a much faster pace of life. Grace Burkholder was no exception to the problem.

This was a girl that could do it all. She played first chair flute in the school's marching band. She Played basketball. She ran cross-country. She rode the short bus. She ran track. Grace could milk five cows in the time her brothers took to milk one. She was the life of every party and the dream of every punk kid in the community. But, she was bored. There just wasn't enough. She wanted bigger, faster, nicer, higher...she could not be happy with the same old routine.

She saw how her brothers had the mobility of taking off in a car and going into the big city. It wasn't fair. She deserved the same freedom they did. They teased her and told her how the "Princess" had to stay home and wait for her prince in shining armor. They chided her about being so young. She wasn't a little girl and she was going to prove it. They laughed at her feigned determination.

Knowing her chances were slim to none (no pun intended), she approached her mother about using the car every once in awhile. Her mother looked at her in total disbelief. "Grace, what are you saying? You know what our religion teaches us. You know the tradition of the Omish. You know you are asking about something diametrically opposed to our very fundamental beliefs." Grace was clueless. "What mother, what are you talking about?" She took Grace by the hand and sat her down on the chesterfield in the front room.

Stroking her curly, blonde hair, her mother instructed the wild and rebellious rascal. "Honey, our Omish leaders have told us time and time again that women are 'never to touch internal combustion engines or that which doth proceed forth from it in any form, fashion or frenetic functionality". Tears filled Jane's eyes as she sensed the undeniable drive of a hundred diesel engines within the fragile, little body of her thirteen-year-old.

"But the boys do", she said with clenched teeth. "Mom, you wouldn't feel this way if you knew that the day is coming when we will join the Mormon Church. So...let's forget the silly traditions of our fathers and get on with life in the fast lane". Jane could not argue with the brilliance of her prophetic princess. "Okay, I'll get the keys and you get on some shoes." Defying gravity, Grace bounded up the stairs in three giant steps.

Before Jane could buckle the seat belt, Grace had hit the gas and they were speeding down the highway in front of their historic Ohio farm. Little did Grace know Sergeant Mennon of the SPD (Stryker Police Department) was waiting along Main Street in

downtown Stryker eating a crème-filled bismark and drinking a cup of black coffee, no sugar. It had been a quiet morning and his doughnut run was a perfect way to end his shift. At sixty-three pounds over weight he did not have the energy to wipe the sweat running down the rows of flesh of his triple chin protruding out of his under sized patrol uniform. Few people knew his uniforms were tailored by Amar the tent maker in the Arab section of Toledo. Who cared, he sunk the bismark and was now juggling the lemon jelly doughnut for a quick disappearing act?

As Grace and June approached the outer limits of the city, the nervous mother suggested Grace slow it down to 65 mph. "Mom, don't worry, have you ever seen a policeman in Stryker, Ohio. When you want a cop in this town you go to Dunkin Doughnuts. Don't worry". About that moment Grace sped by the complacent, confection-consuming constable. Startled, he jumped up in his seat and tried to comprehend what just happened. In the excitement he dumped his doughnut and coffee squarely in his lap. Mennon was mad, very mad.

Mennon was all over the speeding teenager like white on rice. "Inconceivable", Grace blurted aloud. She froze like a deer caught in the glare of someone's headlights. This was impossible. The only time in ten years a policeman has been parked on the highway and Grace gets nabbed! The red lights came on and she quickly made her way over to the side of the road. "Mom, I have an idea", she said out of the side of her mouth as her eyes were riveted to the rear view mirror. "When I say 'move', I am going to open my door and slide under the car to your door and then into the passenger side seat. You stay inside the car and move as quick as you can to the driver's seat". Before Jane could object Grace yelled out, "Move".

Office Mennon was checking some paperwork prior to exiting his cruiser. With the speed and agility of an otter maneuvering through water, Grace slipped from her position in the car to the asphalt and then toward the other side. Unfortunately, her overalls got caught on the transmission. As Officer Mennon approached the car he could see Mrs. Burkholder making her way to the driver's seat. Immediately he knew something was wrong. He pulled his weapon and yanked opened the driver's side door. Leveling his Smith and Wesson Special 38 at Jane he screamed, "Okay lady, where is she, where's the real driver of this car"? Jane was so afraid she could not speak or move. About that time Officer Mennon felt a little tug on his pant leg. "Officer, please don't shot. It's my fault. I was the one driving the car".

Within seconds Grace was cuffed and sitting on the curb. Jane remained in the automobile numb and in shock. All she could ask was why? Why did she allow herself to be talked into such a ridiculous notion? Grace was just as scared. All she could think of was doing hard time in the Ohio State Penitentiary.

Office Mennon produced a black nightstick from his belt. He tapped it in the palm of his hand as he looked straight at Grace. "Young lady, you have committed a very serious crime. The last time this town saw a DUA was eight years ago. "Driving Under the Age" in this town is serious business. With this on your record I doubt you will ever

drive until you are 25 years old. You have seriously endangered the lives of hundreds of people. Not only that, but if I were to turn you in you would spend a mandatory 6 months in the town jail. Not only that...". Just then Officer Mennon could hear Jane saying something from the car. Waving a day old doughnut she found in the back of the car, she quietly motioned him over her way. Like a hypnotist dangling and moving a shiny object in front of a patient, Jane's doughnut caught the full attention of the lecturing lawman. "Perhaps you might reconsider this whole matter. Who knows, there might be a little something in it for you".

It was a chocolate coated, chocolate cake doughnut. Unbeknownst to Jane, this was by far his favorite. Not taking his eyes off of the doughnut, he undid the handcuffs and told Grace to get back in the car. Jane tossed the doughnut about twenty feet in the air. Before it came down into the hands of the plump policeman, Jane had started the car and punched the gas.

Moments later the two of them sat in disbelief in their own driveway. Did it really happen? Was it all just a bad dream? Jane seemed to snap back into reality when Grace interrupted her wondering. "Mom, that was great! When can we do it again?"