

KAYLA'S NEW CRITERION

by Jack Weyland

"Another stupid fun-filled Friday night," Kayla grumbled to herself after Derek, Mike, Andy, Ben and two of Derek's cousins, left.

Derek never told her his cousins' names. And, actually the cousins had only said two words to her all evening. The first word occurred when one of them handed her the empty bowl of popcorn. "More?" he had said. The second communication was when the other cousin decided he wasn't happy with mild picante sauce. He handed her the empty bowl and said, "Hotter?"

Brittany and Emma had left two hours earlier, when the boys first started playing video games. "That's it for me," Brittany had muttered as she stood up to leave. "Once they start on their games, they don't even know we're here,"

Kayla wished she'd left then too, but she couldn't because, actually, this was where she lived.

Looking at the mess in the TV room, Kayla estimated that it was going to take at least thirty minutes to clean up the place before she went to bed. If she didn't clean up, her mom would wake her at seven thirty, on the only day Kayla could sleep in, and insist she clean up the mess her friends had left.

One of the cousins had brought sunflower seeds. He'd thoughtfully brought a plastic cup to spit the shells into after extracting the seed, but a couple of times, in his excitement at wiping out an entire herd of alien intruders, he'd accidentally knocked the cup on the floor. He'd picked up some of them but there were still shells scattered all over the carpet. Shells that she would have to clean up before she went to bed..

At first she hoped she could sweep up the shells but, because of the thick shag carpet, that didn't work. Because her parents were asleep, she couldn't run the vacuum cleaner either, so she had to pick the seeds up one at a time. She grimaced as she did it, knowing that the seeds had been in the mouth of the less hygienic of the two cousins. And, to make it even worse, a couple of the seeds she picked up were still wet from being in that cousin's mouth.

I hate this! she thought. *Every week it's the same! I provide the nachos, the dip, the popcorn, the drinks, and what do the guys do? They show up! That's all! They just show up! And then they leave me with the cleanup. How fair is that?*

Not only were there shells in the TV room, she also found some in the kitchen, in the bathroom and in the hall. Instead of half an hour, it took her almost an hour to clean up.

I've had it! she thought. *This is never going to happen again!*

However, on Sunday during sacrament meeting, when she was feeling more charitable, Kayla decided that if either Derek or Mike, who were in her ward, thanked her for letting them come over Friday night, or if one of them even said they'd had a good time, then maybe she'd relent and let them come over again on Friday night.

But Derek and Mike didn't thank her. And on Monday at school Andy and Ben didn't thank her either. In fact nobody talked about it until Thursday at lunch. "You doing anything tomorrow night?" Derek asked.

"No, not really."

"Is it okay if we come over?"

"Actually, no, it's not okay."

Apparently Derek hadn't been listening. "Great! How about seven-thirty? Andy has a new video game. Is it okay if my cousins come too?"

"Don't come. None of you guys are invited."

"What?"

"You heard me. If you want to be with me Friday night, ask me out."

At first Derek seemed a little confused but he recovered quickly. "Okay, uh, will you go out with me Friday night?"

"What would we be doing?"

"Well, I was thinking we could get some people together and come over to your house, and, you know, watch a movie or play video games."

She shook her head. "Sorry. Not interested."

"How come?"

"Getting together at my house is what we always do. So that wouldn't actually be a date."

"You're calling what you want to do with me a date? Look, I'm not sure that you and I are ready for, you know, that much of a commitment."

"A commitment?" she raged. "Are you out of your mind? You think taking me on a date is too much of a commitment?"

"People might think we like each other."

"We do like each other." She paused. "Or at least we did once."

"Well, yeah, that's true, but, you know, it's better if we're all together."

"I'm sure it's better for you. You guys never bring any food and you never thank me."

“We brought food last time. What about the sunflower seeds?”

“Don’t even start with me about the sunflower seeds, okay? I was up an extra hour picking up all the shells off the floor.”

“Maybe I should talk to Brittany and see if we can use her house Friday night.”
He paused. “With or without you.”

She glared at him. “You do whatever you want.”

“I thought you liked me.”

“I did once, before you and your friends turned into a human locust invasion.”

“Ouch! You are in a bad mood, aren’t you? I’ll go before you say something you’ll really regret.”

“So far I haven’t regretted anything I’ve said.”

An hour later, between classes, Brittany and Kayla passed each other in the hall.
“I need to talk to you,” Brittany called out. “How about in the library after lunch?”

At the far end of the library, there were four soft chairs for people to sit in while they read. It was a perfect place to get away.

“Derek asked if he and his friends could come over Friday night,” Brittany said.
“He says you’re not going to have them at your house anymore. Is that right?”

“Yeah, I’ve had it with those free-loaders.”

“He says you’ll only spend time with him on Friday night if he asks you out.”

“That’s right.”

“He says he feels sorry that you’ve fallen for him so much that you practically begged him to take you out on a date.”

Kayla burst out laughing. “He thinks I’ve fallen for him? He’s totally delusional.”

“Yeah, for sure.”

“So what did you tell him about Friday night?” Kayla asked.

“I said I had to think about it.”

Kayla shrugged. “Look, you do whatever you want. I’d rather stay home than be with those clowns again, watching them play their video games. Do they actually believe they’re saving the world from annihilation?”

Brittany laughed. “I think they do.”

“If you want to have the guys over, go ahead.”

Brittany tilted back her head, deep in thought. “Once I start, they’ll want to come every Friday night, won’t they?”

“Yeah, they will. And they’ll just take it for granted and never even thank you.”

Brittany smiled. “Unless we teach them what we want from them.”

Brittany and Kayla worked on their plan after school and printed out ten copies.

FRIDAY NIGHT RULES

(If you want to spend time with either Kayla or Brittany)

1. **You come up with a plan.**

When we ask you what we’re going to do, don’t say, “I don’t know.” Come up with a plan. Hint: There are five school plays yet this year (free), three concert band concerts (free), seven Friday night school dances (almost free), four classic movie nights at the public library (\$1.00), eight home game basketball games on a Friday night (free), Pick one.

2. **You ask us out no later than Tuesday night.**

Don't start with, "Are you doing anything Friday night?" Explain your plan to us.

Tell us when you'll pick us up, and what the appropriate dress will be. Your choices are:

a) Sunday best; b) good casual; c) school clothes; and d) sports attire

3. **Don't plan on ending the night at somebody's home with us watching you play video games.**

Don't even mention video games to us. We're embarrassed for you that these games are such a big part of your life. Grow up, okay?

4. **Don't imagine we owe you anything just because you took us on a date.**

Your reward is that you get to spend time with us. If that isn't enough, then either we over-estimated you or else you've under-valued us.

5. **Within two days after the date, express appreciation for the time we spent with you.** Sample: "Thank you so much for going out with me Friday night. I had

a great time! And I hope you did too. It was so good to get to know you a little better.

One great thing I learned about you is that _____(fill in the blank.) (This next item is optional.) "I hope we can do this again sometime." (Don't say it if you don't mean it.)

"These are the new rules if you want to spend time with us on Friday nights," Kayla said, giving Derek a copy.

Derek read the rules and then started laughing. "This is a joke, right?"

"Not to us."

"There's no way..." he paused then realized he was about to shoot himself in the foot. "Let me think about this, okay?"

She shrugged. "Yeah, sure."

"What if we don't go along with this, and we never spend Friday nights with you and Brittany anymore?" Derek asked.

"Well, my folks will be happy because they won't have to stock up on extra food for Friday nights. And I'll be relieved that I won't have to watch you and your friends battle alien monsters." She began to mimic the voice-over introduction for one of the video games. "Alien warriors from the planet Zorcon are about to take over the world. Only you can stop this invasion. Will you take up the battle and save our planet?"

Derek blushed. "Okay, I admit, that does sound a little juvenile, doesn't it?"

She nodded. "Look, I could be wrong but I believe you're better than that."

"You do?"

"I do. I've always admired you, Derek. Well, not so much lately, but, you know, you can still turn that around if you want. If not, well, that's your choice. Besides, this isn't the end of our friendship. I'm sure we'll still talk before seminary class begins. So it's not like Brittany and I won't have any contact with you and Andy, Ben, and Mike."

Derek nodded. shook his head and slowly walked away.

On Friday night, Kayla and Brittany spent their time alone, without the boys.

"Well, this has worked out great," Brittany complained.

"Sorry. Look, you can have them over at your house next week if you want."

"With you?" Brittany asked.

"No. I'm done with that." She sighed. "I just hope I can find some guys at college next year with a little more maturity."

"How are you going to do that?" Brittany asked.

"If I'm ever in a guy's apartment, like for family home evening, and I see video games on his shelves, I'll know better than to waste my time on him."

"I know our Friday nights with the guys left a lot to be desired, but at least we were with them."

"So you're saying maybe this was a bad idea, right?" Kayla asked.

"Maybe. Are we going to go our whole lives being disappointed by the men in our lives?"

"I don't know. I hope not."

Meanwhile, at Derek's house, Mike Andy, Ben, and Derek's two cousins had been playing video games all night.

"You got any more salsa?" Ben asked.

"Not for you."

"What do you mean, not for me?"

"I've been watching you. You use twice as much salsa as anyone else in the entire world."

"Some people like salsa more than they like tortilla chips," Ben said.

"Then some people should bring their own salsa. Do you know how much a bottle of this stuff costs?"

"You sound like my mom," Ben said.

"I went to a lot of work for you guys tonight and have any of you thanked me? No."

"Now you're beginning to sound like Kayla," Mike said.

"Well maybe she was right." Derek turned off the video game.

“What did you do that for? I was about to wipe out all the alien life pods,” Andy complained.

“Guys, listen up!” Derek said. “Without Kayla and Brittany, this is like scout camp all over again.”

“So, what do you want to do?” Mike asked.

“Would it kill us to ask some girls to a school play or a basketball game once in a while?”

“You’re just going to cave in to them? What kind of a man are you?” Ben asked.

Derek had to think about it for a minute. “I guess I’m like my dad. He tries to honor what my mom asks of him. My guess is he learned to treat girls with respect before he met my mom. Like maybe even in high school.”

Andy was still bitter. “Once you destroy the alien life pods, they can’t reproduce. I was so close to totally wiping them out.”

“Look, let’s just clean up and then you guys go home. I’ve had enough of this.”

“We have to clean up?” Ben complained.

“You think I’m going to clean up for you clowns?” Derek shot back.

“Kayla never made us clean up.”

“That’s part of the reason she got mad at us too. Ben and Mike, you wash and dry any dishes we’ve used. Andy, you pick up any stuff that got dropped on the floor. I’ll empty the trash after you guys leave.”

While they worked, Derek went online to see what high school activities were coming up.

He returned just as his friends were about to finish up.. “Okay, guys, here’s the

deal. Next Friday there's a school play. It'll be free for us and the girls. I say we each ask a girl to go with us. After it's over, we'll come back here and have cake and ice cream. I'll make the cake."

"You can make a cake?"

"I can learn, right?"

Derek pulled out his copy of the Kayla Rules and quickly read them over again. "You guys need to ask whoever you want to take at least by Tuesday. Tell them we'll pick them up around quarter to seven. The dress will be school clothes. When we take them home, you will thank them for the date. Oh, and just because you've taken them out does not mean you can kiss them. One more thing. By Sunday night you will have each called and thanked the girl you took out for going out with you. Any questions?"

"This isn't what we do," Andy complained.

"It is now. The game's changed. Instead of trying to save the world from alien invaders, we're going to try and be actual friends with the girls we respect. At least that's what I'm going to do. You guys can do whatever you want."

A week later, the four boys and their dates took up almost an entire row at the school auditorium. During the intermission of the play, Kayla reached over, grabbed Derek's hand and squeezed it. With a grin, she said, "I'm having a really good time with you tonight."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah."

"Me too, actually," he said.

“Do you want to know why I’m having such a good time?” she asked.

“Yeah, I would.”

“Because I feel valued and respected.”

“And that’s good, right?”

“Right.” She paused. “And my respect for you has grown tremendously.”

He broke into a big grin. “You know what? Next Friday night there’s a school band concert. You want to go?”

“I would love to go with you to a band concert,” she said.

“Just one thing. Is it okay if my cousins come too?”

She panicked. “With dates, right?”

“Yeah, sure.”

“No sunflower seeds, okay?”

“No sunflower seeds.”

“Okay, we’ll see how it goes with your cousins.”

A month later, after four consecutive weeks of Friday night dates, Kayla offered to let the boys come over and play video games at her house.

Derek asked around and came back with, “We talked about it and we decided that instead we’d rather take you girls to a school basketball game. We’ll pick you up at seven. The dress will be school clothes. We might eat popcorn but that will be at the game so we won’t have to clean it up.”

“Why are you doing this when I’ve offered to let you come over to my house and play video games?”

“This is more fun.”

And, indeed, it was.