
THE
FIREWORKS
BALLOON
FIREWORKS
BIG ★ LOUD ★ FUN!
SAFETY FIRST ALWAYS
DRAGON'S REVENGE 9000
MAXIMUM BOOM.
MAXIMUM HEIGHT.
MAXIMUM WOW.
LIBERTY LAUNCHER XL
SAFETY GUIDE
READ IT.
KNOW IT.
LIVE IT.
BUY ONE
BE SAFE
HAVE FUN

The Fireworks Balloon loved the Fourth of July.

The problem was that everybody else loved it too.

Especially the people who waited until the last possible minute.

The parking lot was packed.

The line stretched outside.

And every customer seemed to have the exact same question.

"Which one goes the highest?"

Before the Fireworks Balloon could answer, his coworker appeared.

The Safety Balloon.

"Excellent question."

Oh no.

The customer looked nervous.

The Fireworks Balloon looked nervous.

Everybody knew what was coming.

"The Dragon's Revenge 9000 is one of our most impressive fireworks. However,

before discussing altitude, we should discuss proper placement, weather

conditions, emergency planning, backup emergency planning, backup backup

emergency planning—"

"Brother."

The customer blinked.

"We get it."

The Safety Balloon nodded.

"Good."

Then he pulled out a notebook.

"Now for page two."

The Fireworks Balloon checked the clock.

Not yet.

But soon.

The customer sighed.

The day rolled on.

More customers.

More fireworks.

More questions.

One customer pointed at a giant firework.

"What's that one do?"

The Safety Balloon smiled.

The Fireworks Balloon immediately checked the clock.

"That," said the Safety Balloon, "is the Bald Eagle Express Mark Seven."

"Cool."

"It is also important to note that eagles do not actually operate this firework."

The customer stared at him.

The Safety Balloon continued.

"Many people assume they do."

"Brother."

"Right."

The customer bought it anyway.

Another customer walked up.

"Which one is the loudest?"

The Safety Balloon adjusted his glasses.

"How loud would you like to be concerned?"

"...what?"

"Excellent question."

The Fireworks Balloon looked at the clock again.

Earlier that morning, another balloon had stopped by the stand.

The Fireworks Balloon had quietly handed him an envelope.

"You got everything?"

The balloon smiled.

"We're good."

"Good."

Then he disappeared.

The Safety Balloon looked up.

"What was that about?"

"Nothing."

"That looked like something."

"It was nothing."

The Safety Balloon stared at him.

Then returned to organizing safety pamphlets.

They were already organized.

The sun started sinking.

The crowd started shrinking.

Finally, after what felt like the longest day of the year, the last customer left.

The parking lot was empty.

The stand was closed.

The Fireworks Balloon locked the front door.

Then headlights appeared.

A truck.

Slowly pulling into the parking lot.

The Fireworks Balloon froze.

No.

No no no no no.

Not now.

Not today.

The truck got closer.

Closer.

Then...

It turned around.

And left.

The Fireworks Balloon looked toward the sky.

"Thank you."

He grabbed his keys.

"I gotta go."

The Safety Balloon nodded.

"Drive safely."

"I will."

"Wear your seatbelt."

"I will."

"Watch for deer."

"There are no deer."

"There could be."

The Fireworks Balloon left before another safety briefing could begin.

He raced across town.

Fireworks were already exploding everywhere.

Boom.

Boom.

Boom.

His heart sank.

He was late.

After all the planning.

After all the customers.

After all the safety lectures.

He had missed it.

Then he arrived.

Everything was dark.

No fireworks.

No crowd.

No show.

Just the balloon he loved standing there waiting.

"Did I miss it?" he asked.

She smiled.

"No."

Then the first firework launched.

BOOM.

Gold filled the sky.

Then another.

And another.

And another.

The Fireworks Balloon blinked.

Wait.

He knew those fireworks.

He picked those fireworks.

Then he saw his friend step out from behind a trailer.

The one from that morning.

The one who took the envelope.

His friend gave him a thumbs up.

The whole show had been waiting for him.

One final firework launched.

It exploded above them in a burst of red, white, and blue.

The Fireworks Balloon smiled.

The balloon beside him smiled too.

For a few minutes they just stood there together.

Watching the show.

No customers.

No lines.

No safety lectures.

Just fireworks.

When the finale ended, he looked over at her.

"Sorry I'm late."

She smiled.

"You're right on time."

And honestly?

It had been worth the wait.

FOURTH OF JULY SPECIAL

The Fireworks Balloon

Happy Fourth of July

For the people working while everyone else celebrates.

For the last-minute shoppers.

For the cautious friends with the safety binders.

And for the ones trying to make it somewhere important on time.

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