

So I was reading what my good and hilarious friend, Dan Brown had to say about the deodorant spray he recently tried.



I have to agree with him. I tried a free sample of the same stuff; it promised to make me irresistible to all women. What actually happened was that anyone caught in close quarters with me for more than, say, five seconds, left the area looking like they'd just been maced. I concluded that a more accurate name for this product could be found simply by replacing the "X" and "E" letters with a pair of "S's"

That stuff's not the only offender out there. Once, while perusing one of those dollar stores looking for cheap kids' birthday stuff with a friend of mine, we ran across a shelf full of men's colognes. They were all named "Just Like (insert high end name brand name here) with the words "Just Like" printed in a font size only the Hubble Telescope could detect. They all had logos fighting border skirmishes with trademark infringement. They all cost only 99 cents a bottle.

After taking a whiff, we realized they all should have been named: "Just Like Deez." Sex appeal is one of the most powerful weapons in advertising. Used adroitly, it can sell anything from floor wax to elephant suppositories.

I'm not sure when our desire for supreme gender lure becomes so all-consuming but I'd bet the end of middle school/beginning of high school is probably a good place to start. Before I became the sex symbol that graces these pages, I was a skinny, dorky kid with a bad haircut, buzzard beak nose, railroad track braces and legs like a Sandpiper. If you were like me, you would try anything from Voo Doo to hot glue to make that hot girl notice you -- and by "notice you" I mean "be able to even look at you with a straight face for more than three seconds."

When I was a kid, the county recreation department held a dance once a month for 7th-12th graders. It was actually pretty cool -- good bands and all the latest toys like black lights and a huge mirrored disco ball. Usually, the younger guys, the seventh, eighth, and some ninth graders, would spend much of the evening pushing, shoving, telling dirty jokes loudly within earshot of the girls. That's because most of these guys knew they were way behind the eight ball; most of the girls their age -- hotties and notties alike -- would be going for older men, and by older, I mean at least tenth graders.

When you're a seventh grader in the stag line, you are a true dark horse contender riddled with handicaps both natural and social. Your voice either hasn't changed or is breaking badly. Your mom not only may still dress you, she may still cut your hair with a salad bowl and a pair of sewing shears. With all that already against you, if you somehow manage to finally screw up your courage and ask a girl to dance, there's a better than even chance that she's going to turn you down cold. Worse, she may, with great public reluctance, say yes and either drag you to a remote corner where no one can see you or dance with her back turned, trying to ignore your spastic twitching.

I knew I was no fashion plate, but with a little creativity, I thought I might have some game.

Dad didn't think men should get their hair styled in salons, so I didn't have the big hair, big '80s commode brush hair style so many other kids with hipper parents did. Instead, I grew it kind of long and wore a ball cap before I went out, the better to achieve a certain style I thought to be creative, frugal and debonair but that everyone else on the planet then and now calls "hat head." My dad also wasn't much into spending extra bucks on shirts with gators or ponies on them, but one of the department stores had a line of cheaper shirts with critters that looked almost like the status symbols everyone else wore. I knew, by having seen Saturday Night Fever, that tight pants made disco chicks drool, so I went one better and found a pair of old white Easter britches that fit me so snugly you could tell what religion I was from 100 yards away.

My big moment came at the end of the night. She sat there, a beautiful young thing, all by herself – and the band was playing a slow song.

I don't know how I did it, because I would not discover alcohol for a few more years, but somehow I screwed up my nerve, sauntered over to her, and shrieked into her ear, "WANNA DANCE!"

I'm guessing the sheer volume of my request stunned her senseless, because she nodded, stood, held out her hands, and voila! Fred and Ginger hit the dance floor. At least, we were moving slowly in a circle, at arms' length, me pouring sweat like a pitcher pump, for more than two minutes.

Until my wedding day, some thirty-one years later, that may have been the greatest score of my life.