

No Tears for Eddy

By DC Blair

I knew there was trouble when I first saw them come in. They stood just inside the door peering into the dim room, their eyes slowly adjusting from the bright sunshine outside. He was in his early 30s, I guessed of medium build and height. His hair was cut neatly above the ears, his face clean shaven. A yellow sports blazer hung over his blue

jeans. The girl was shorter, the top of her head coming to about his shoulders. Her hair looked soft and was long, falling down her back. She occasionally swept a strand out of her eyes. She wore a short fall dress that showed off what I thought was an excellent figure. While his eyes were steadfast, peering into the

darkness, hers were frowning and studying her hands, looking up at him once or twice as if confused about something. He didn't seem to notice her and she would look back to her hands. He said something to her and they walked towards a table several apart from the bar. I finished drying a few glasses before I approached them.

"What'll it be folks?" I asked. "Gin and tonic," said the man. I looked at the girl and she looked up at me for only a few seconds through eyes as brown and soft as her hair. "A Singapore sling, please." Normally I would ask her age, she looked so young, but there was something obviously troubling her and

besides, it wasn't like the liquor inspector would by at such a slow hour. When I came back with the drinks they were still quiet. I set the glasses down and the man in the yellow blazer handed me a few bills and waved me off. Back at the bar, I washed a few more glasses and heard them talking in low overtones. I had turned the radio off a half hour ago as soon as the news was over and the two older guys were sitting quietly at the back, so the young couple's voices carried well, although I could only hear the odd word at first.

I didn't know what it was, but something bothered me about them. Maybe it was the difference in age. I was about to turn the radio on again when I saw the two men leave and decided I would clear the table. They had one of my special sandwiches and four bottles of beer each. I kept a mental track of what every customer consumed and tried to find a common denominator between that and their appearance but so far there was none.

Business was normally slow at this hour and only a few strays seemed to wander in. I wondered what the man and girl were doing here now. She could normally be in school and he were on holiday or something. If there is one thing I've learned in this job, it's that you just can't read people.

As I passed by them, carrying the large tray loaded with the dirty dishes, they stopped talking and started up again as I reached the bar.

"Married?" The sound almost made me drop the dishes as it broke the silence. It was the girl.

"Ssh. Keep your voice down," he returned, somewhat nervously.

She did, but it was still loud enough for me to hear.

"Why didn't you tell me you were married?"

"Would you have gone out with me if you knew I was?"

"Of course not!" He shrugged his shoulders and looked into his glass, proving his point.

"But why would you ask me out? I never showed any interest in you. You were the one who went out of his way to be noticed."

He said something I couldn't hear that seemed to quieten her. He signalled me for another drink which I made and brought over. The girl hadn't even touched her glass. He said something as I walked back to the bar but I didn't catch it. The girl's voice started up then again.

"And that's my fault?"

"No, of course not."

"Then why?"

"Because I love you. Neither was caring how loud they were now."

"How much Eddy?" she asked.

"Do you love me enough to leave her?"

I couldn't hear his mumbled reply, but knew it was no.

There was silence for a few minutes and they were making me feel uncomfortable, so I turned the radio on, loud enough to drown out their voices if they started again. They didn't though. I looked up from the sink and saw her looking at him, a different expression than when they had first come in. He was studying what was left in his glass. She stood up suddenly and left him sitting there. He didn't even look at her as she left. I thought she looked older when she passed me. One thing that really surprised me was there wasn't a tear in her eye, rather they appeared more steady, firmer, not hating exactly, but more determined. Maybe she was older.

He signalled me again after she left and I thought, you bastard. Oh well, you meet all kinds in this business. I carried a fresh drink to him.

One day I'm going to sell the place.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This concludes our entries for the 1991 Fiction Contest. The winner will be announced in the coming weeks.

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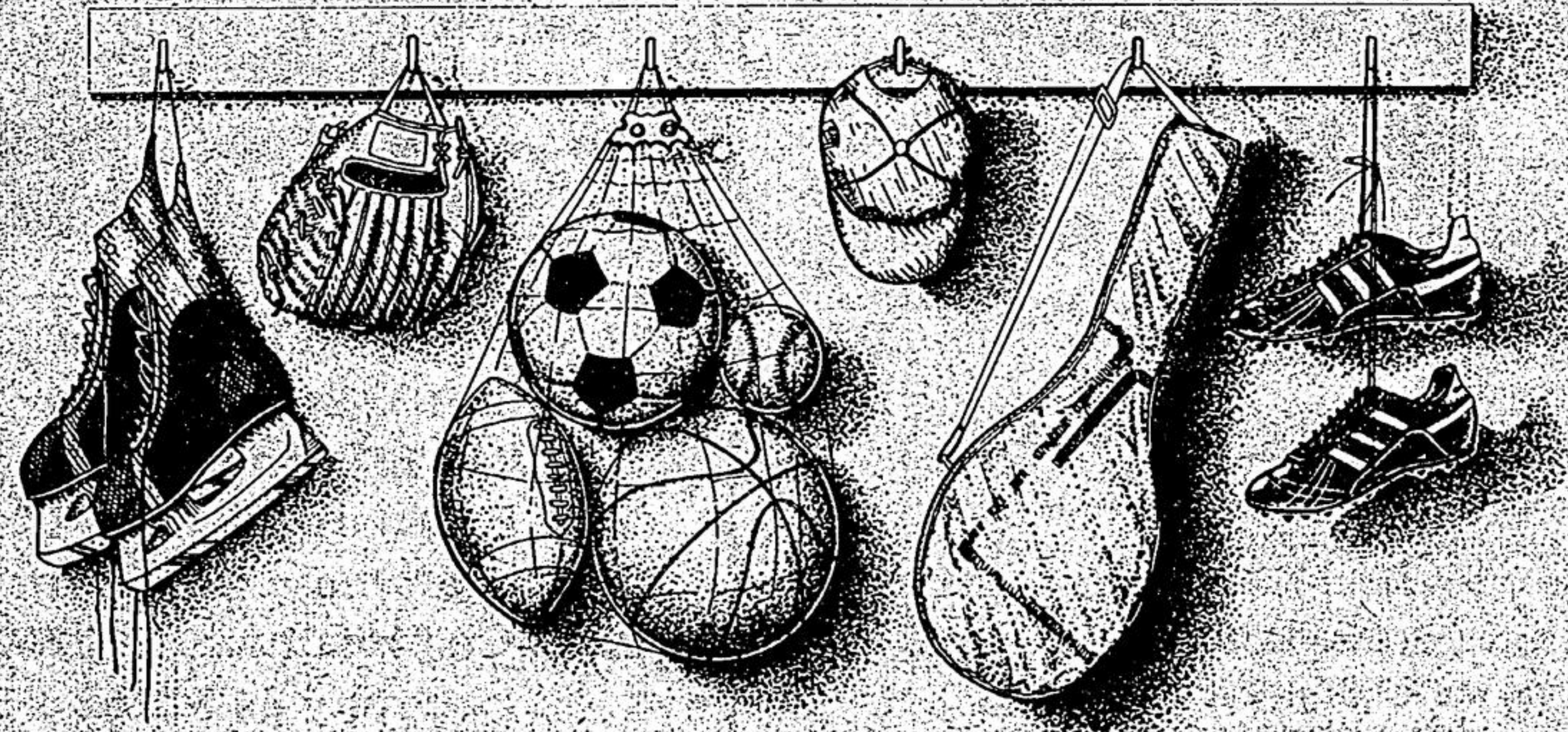
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