

Chapter 7

Schaefer Is The One Beer To Have When You're Having More Than One

"I really handled the pressure well, don't you think?" I asked. Tank Arbuster, Joey Mitchell, my brother Pat, and I were drinking sodas at the counter of Glickman's Drug Store after practice. Mr. Glickman had just made us orange vanilla cream sodas and now he was back in the pharmacy section making someone's medicine. "I can't decide what the highlight was. Was it when I cried during warm-ups or when I let the fly ball go way over my head in outfield practice?"

"You weren't that bad, Eileen," Tank said.

"Twenty-seven players did better than me."

"I don't know," said Joey. "Crazy Arm Dunn lost three balls in the swamp and my dad told the Microphone that he'd cut him today if he didn't stop announcing batting practice. I figure only twenty-five players did better than you."

"Gee, thanks. That makes me feel a lot better."

"Did you guys see that Bill Rohr beat the Yankees again yesterday? I think maybe we've got ourselves the next Sandy Koufax," said Tank. Rookie Bill Rohr had won his first two major league games, both against the New York Yankees. He would not be the next Sandy Koufax though. Sandy Koufax, one of the greatest pitchers ever, would go to the Hall of Fame; Bill Rohr would never win another game for the Red Sox and would soon get sent back to the minors. The next year he would play for the Cleveland Indians. It wasn't easy being a Sox fan.

"You never asked Dad if you could go out for The Gas, did you?" Pat asked me. "You disobeyed Dad, didn't you?"

"Who bought you that soda, huh?" I answered.

"It's going to be World War III when he finds out, Eileen. And it won't be just you that he yells at either. I'll get blamed, too, if I don't tell him."

"And if you do tell him, you'll stand a better chance of making the team. It's an easy choice for you," I said. "Except you'll never make the cut anyways if you keep stepping into the bucket when you're up at the plate."

"What do you mean?" Pat asked.

“When the pitch is coming in, you step away from it with your front foot. It’s like you’re scared, only I know you’re not because you hang in there pretty tough against my curves in the backyard. Stepping in the bucket makes it real hard for you to hit the ball, especially the outside pitch. I even heard Mr. Reynolds tell Joey’s dad that’s what you were doing.”

“How can I stop it?”

“Step into each pitch,” I answered. “Before every pitch, tell yourself to move towards the ball. Step a little left and forward on an inside pitch, a little right and forward on an outside one. Then just hit the ball like you do in the backyard. Do that and you’ve got a chance.”

“It seems to me, Pat, that your best chance at making The Gas is if Eileen is here to point out stuff like that to you,” Joey said.

“Now that I’ve got my allowance back,” I added, “there might be a few more orange vanilla cream sodas, too.” I wasn’t above bribery.

Speed Miller and Bobby Harty came into Glickman’s. Speed went over to the magazine section and picked up the latest Spiderman comic book. Bobby Harty serenaded us with his favorite song. It was a beer jingle that played often in between innings of Sox games on the radio.

“Schaefer....is the.....one beer to have, when you’re having more than one,” Bobby sang. He had a good voice, too. “Schaefer pleasure doesn’t fade, even when your thirst is done.” Mr. Glickman peered over the drug counter and laughed when he saw that it was Bobby. “The most rewarding flavor in this man’s world, for people who are having fun,” Bobby crooned. “Schaefer is the, one beer to have,” and he really belted out the last part, “when you’re having more than one.”

“We’re drinking orange vanilla creams, Bobby, not Schaefer beers,” said Joey.

“Red Sox and Yankees again today, guys,” Bobby answered. “I figure I’ll hear the Schaefer jingle at least twice and if it goes extra innings, maybe three times.”

Wally “Speed” Miller came over to the counter with the Spiderman comic book. He rolled it up like a baseball bat and swung and missed an imaginary pitch. “It’s a lot harder than playing pick-up ball in the neighborhood, don’t you think?” Speed said to me. “But at least you only cried once. I guess that girls can’t handle the pressure.”

Pat almost never got involved in talk like that. He wouldn’t turn eleven for another month and he was the quietest fifth grader in JFK Elementary School. Pat

wasn't quiet this time though. "You keep talking about all the things girls can't do, Wally, but you couldn't get a hit off this girl last Saturday. Maybe *you* just can't handle the pressure. Maybe you're afraid that you'll lose your spot on the team to a girl."

Tank and Joey clinked their soda glasses together. "I'll drink to that," Tank said.