

Albert Bender
Eng. 615
Character Sketch
February 13, 1992

Woody smiled as the crowd kept pouring in from Thirty-fifth Street. April 7th, opening day at Comiskey Park, and it was a sunny, fifty-four degrees. Guaranteed sellout. "Forty-four thousand tickets sold," he said to Liam, his fourteen-year-old apprentice, "so there'll be a whole lot of people without, trying to get in." He took a small wad of rolled-up tickets from the pocket of his maroon windbreaker. "Now take these over there by section twenty-eight and do what I told you. Don't worry--I'll be watching in case a cop shows up."

great opening

"Gotcha, Pop," said Liam, grabbing the roll and stashing it inside his grey sweatshirt. "I'll be back for some more in a few minutes."

"Remember, they're box seats--nothing less than forty or fifty bucks each," reminded Woody as Liam hustled away toward the burgeoning knot of people clogging the entrance at section twenty-eight. Woody genuinely liked Liam, and when the boy started calling him Pop, Woody liked him even more. The affinity was obvious; Woody saw a lot of himself in his young apprentice; they had so much in common. Except for their religions. Liam was a practicing Irish Catholic and Woody was a nonpracticing Jewish Christian agnostic, which, he would confess, was not only oxymoronic but plainly moronic as well. Nevertheless, they had both grown up, or better, survived tough South Chicago, and they had both the smarts and the guts to go after a buck. Even better, Liam was using his commission (fifty dollars, rather than a free ticket) to help support his family.

I like the way you back-track and supply us with info -

"Mum's not feeling too good," Liam had said when he first asked Woody to teach him the art of scalping. "And I got three sisters and two brothers and no father. Just ran off one day."

Woody also knew a thing or two about being the man of the house. His father had provided a similar lack of support. And as Woody stood off in the distance, watching Liam scurrying all around, making deal after deal, he even considered giving the kid a raise. After all, having a helper certainly saved a lot of legwork. And Woody was at an age where even strong legs like his could use all the rest they could get.

But when he saw the plainclothes cop accost Liam, Woody sprang into action. He'd have to explain why, besides the scalping, they were within (and they were well within) a thousand feet of the ballpark. Woody knew most of the cops around Comiskey, and they would "look the other way" for the free tickets they could order for future games. This guy, however, was unfamiliar, and he stood rigid over Liam, as though chasing scalpers was an important job that benefitted mankind. Luckily, Woody had an ace up his sleeve, or actually, in his pocket.

"Excuse me, sir, what seems to be the trouble?" asked Woody as he approached from his vantage point.

"You know scalping's not legal. And whattya doin' so close to the gate?" challenged the cop, who was bedecked in his Joe-average-White-Sox-fan ruse: white logo on navy jacket and navy logo on white baseball cap. The only things missing were a hotdog and a beer.

"Hey, sorry, pal--we don't want any trouble. Just tryin' to make a few bucks to send the family down to Florida. My mother's

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health--you know...."

Plainclothes' expression softened. "Yeah, I know," he said, smiling. "My mother's always bugging me to take her down to Ft. Lauderdale to see the Yankees in spring training. I'm a Sox fan myself, but I guess she hasn't forgotten her New York heritage. Anyway, I can't afford the trip."

"Well, maybe I can help you do the next best thing," offered Woody, pulling out a White Sox schedule. The Yankees will be in town the weekend of May 10th. There's a Mother's Day doubleheader that Sunday. I can get you two tickets, field boxes, first or third base side, whichever dugout you want to be near. How about it--make a great present."

"Wow, you can do that?"

"Sure, no problem. Look, I'm always here when the Sox are home. You just let me know which side you want and you're in. I can get the tickets to you in two weeks, maybe less."

"Geez, that'd be great. Thanks a lot. Say, what's your name, anyway?"

"Woody."

"Well, Woody, it's a pleasure to know ya. I'm Hank. Sorry if I hassled your kid. And if any of the boys who patrol around here give you trouble, just mention my name. Thanks again," he said, shaking Woody's hand before he turned and walked away toward another kid who had just sold four tickets.

Liam handed over the money from his sales, and Woody gave him the rest of his tickets. A scalper never gives the entire roll to a kid. He might be tempted to take off and start on his own, as Woody

had done when he was fourteen.

"Gee, Pop, that's really cool," said Liam, smiling in admiration.

"You mean the way I handled old Hank? Naah, it's really pretty easy. Most of the stadium cops are nice guys. You just have to know how to deal with them."

"No, I mean how you take care of your family. Are you really gonna send them all to Florida?"

"Yep," Woody replied, "all seven of them. But I'll put them in two groups. There's a lot of hatred."

"So I guess I won't be seeing you for a while, right?"

"Why's that?" queried Woody.

"Well, ain't you goin' to Florida, too?"

"Hell no--Disney World, Epcot Center--that's not for me. Besides, I'm the one who likes to make the money; they're the ones who like to spend it. Me, I'm heading north."

"What's good up north in April?" asked Liam.

"Wrigley Field," answered Woody, "the Cubs have their home opener in four days. Pirates in town. Complete sellout. Over thirty-eight thousand people needing tickets. How about, ^{it}pal? You in?"

At -
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A

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