

His First and Last Winter

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I FELT A SINKING FEELING AS I WALKED THE STERILE HOSPITAL CORRIDORS TOWARD HIS ROOM.

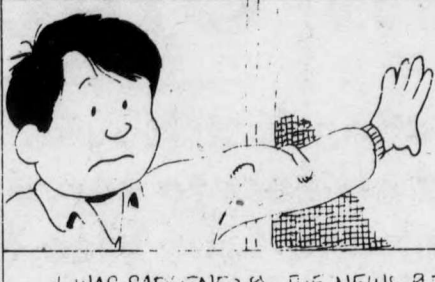


HERE I WAS... 9 YEARS OLD... NOT REALLY KNOWING WHAT DEATH WAS BUT FAMILIAR WITH IT. I REMEMBERED THE DEAD PORCUPINE ON THE SIDE OF THE ROAD...



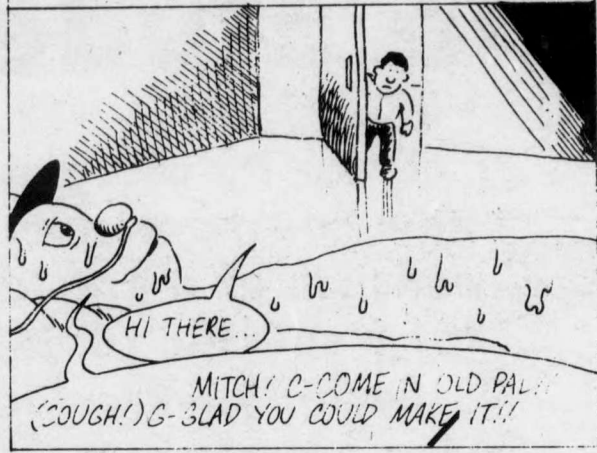
...THE FAMILY CAT, FOUND STIFF AND DEHYDRATED IN THE BACK YARD, A FEVER OF MAGGOTS BOILING INSIDE.

THOSE EXAMPLES I COULD UNDERSTAND, BUT THIS... THIS WAS UNREAL. HERE WAS MY BEST FRIEND DYING, AND I JUST DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO REACT.



I WAS SADWENED BY THE NEWS, BUT I WAS ALSO ANGRY... WHY DIDN'T HE NOTICE THE SYMPTOMS? WHY'D HE RAY ALL DAY AND IGNORE THE PAIN?!!

AS I ENTERED THE ROOM AND HEARD THE ELECTRIC HUM OF THE MACHINES PUMPING AND BREATHING, I KNEW I COULDN'T FAKE CHEERFULNESS.



HI THERE...
MITCH! C-C-COME IN OLD PAL!
(COUGH!) G-G-GLAD YOU COULD MAKE IT!!

...I NOTE TODAY SO I CAN GET OUT OF HERE... HOW DO YOU FEEL?



VERY GOOD, I'M FEELING... I'M FEELING AT THE...
...GOODS

LOOK... RALPH WAS IN YESTERDAY... HE (COUGH) BROUGHT SOME CANDY, BUT THE DOC SAYS... (CHOKES) I CAN'T COUGH!!



...SHOULD'VE SEEN IT COMING! I KNEW IT WOULD GET WARMER!! I KNEW, BUT I NEVER THOUGHT... NEVER MADE PLANS! (SOB!!)

NOW, DON'T GO BLAMING YOURSELF, MITCH. IT WAS BOUND TO HAPPEN SOONER OR LATER... IN S-S-SOME WAYS... MAYBE THIS IS BEST.



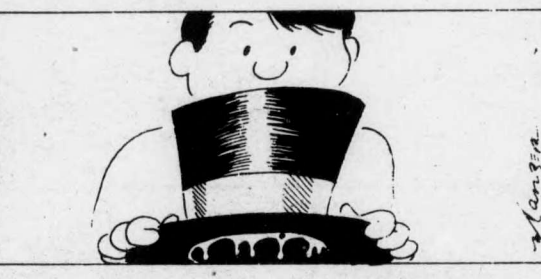
ANYHOW, I KNOW NOW THAT I'M GOING TO A BETTER PLACE... THAT'S WHY I WANT YOU... TO...
... PULL MY HAT OFF...

SAT IN STUNNED SILENCE. IT WAS A LONG TIME BEFORE EITHER OF US MOVED. THEN HE REACHED OVER WEAKLY AND SQUEEZED MY HAND.



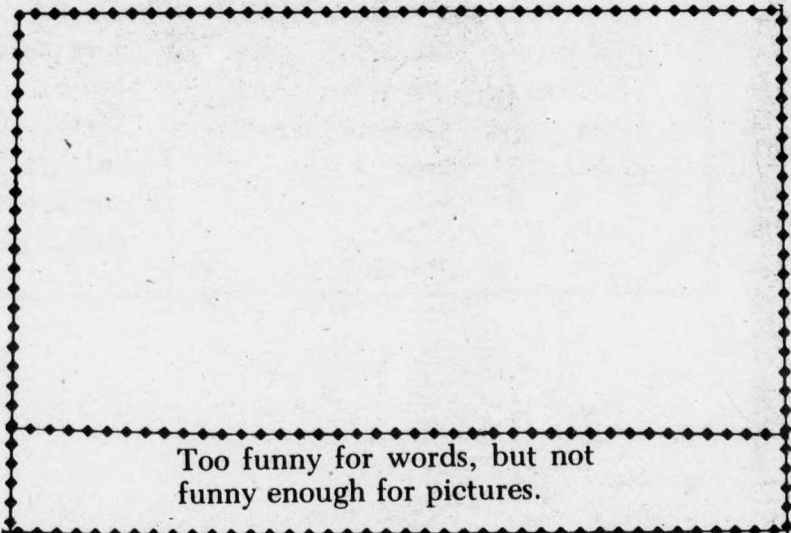
...AS I FELT THE COOL WATER DRIPPING BETWEEN MY FINGERS, I KNEW I COULDN'T LET HIM SUFFER ANY LONGER.

THE HAT CAME OFF WITH A WET POP. HE LOOKED PEACEFULLY UP AT ME, TENSED QUICKLY, THEN FADED WITH A SIGH.



EACH WINTER I STILL LOOK AT THE HAT AND THINK... 'WHAT IF I BUILT ANOTHER SNOWMAN AND...' BUT NO. NO. HE WAS ONE OF A KIND. THINGS COULD NEVER BE THE SAME AS HIS FIRST AND LAST WINTER.

LIFE



Too funny for words, but not funny enough for pictures.

GOING TO HELL WITH THE TOKE

"...AND THIS WEEK IN ROCK NEWS DRUMMER RICK ALLEN OF THE GROUP DEF LEPPARD HAD HIS RIGHT ARM AMPUTATED AS THE RESULT OF AN AUTO ACCIDENT. ALLEN HAS NOT OFFICIALLY LEFT THE GROUP, BUT BAND MEMBERS DO EXPECT TO SEE LESS OF HIM."



Kevin Heenan