**The Glove**

Ken Post

 Rich flipped the light switch and two bulbs cast shadows across the tables he’d set up in the garage for the moving sale. It was too late now to put in the LED lights he should have installed years ago. The folding tables and sheets of plywood on sawhorses lay heaped with clothes, pots, pans, tools, and the bric-a-brac of modern life. Other items were propped up around the edges of the garage. An old set of golf clubs had tipped over into a dim corner, so he stood them up where they were more visible.

 Most of the items had price tags except for three big boxes labeled, ‘anything in here = one dollar.’ Rich didn’t want to be asked the price by the horde of people who would descend on their moving sale, so he checked the price tags. Grabbing a Sharpie, he changed an old power drill from 15 dollars to 10. Garage sale people were like buzzards fighting over a carcass. Rich’s watch showed 8:45 a.m. and they were going to open the garage door at 9:00. The early birds would show up, trying to get the jump on their competition. He was not going to open early no matter how many people peered through the garage door windows and banged on the front door of the house. Nine o’clock meant nine o’clock.

 Rich walked down an aisle, shoving a garden hose out of the way so people didn’t trip over it. As he did, he almost brushed his son’s Wilson baseball glove lying on its side next to a pair of ping-pong paddles. He passed his hand over the glove, afraid to touch it, as if it possessed some magic power. The faint smell of oiled leather permeated the air. Rich had taught Kyle how to keep the glove supple with oil and replace its leather lacing. Together, they weaved leather strands through the holes, tying the end knots when the lacing wore out. Kyle’s indelible-inked initials and phone number on the back of the webbing stared at him.

 The thwack of a ball hitting the mitt came back to him every time Kyle swept up a ground ball or chased a pop-up flaring down the foul line. Rich had not known what to do with the glove. Bury it in the backyard? Throw it in the lake? Stick it in a trophy case? In the end, the glove sat on the plywood table as if it belonged there, waiting for the next kid to snag line drives.

 Rich sighed and backed away, and as he did, Regina entered the garage.

 “I found some more ones and fives to make change.” Regina wagged a wad of cash in her hand. “Where’s the cashbox?”

 “On top of the washing machine.”

 Regina counted the cash and clicked the metal box’s lid shut. She wandered over to a long clothes rack Rich had made for the garage sale and slid hangers as if she were shopping at Nordstroms. She moved down the aisle, adjusting items on the table and doing a final inspection. She saw the glove. “What’s this doing here?” She pointed to the glove.

 “It’s for sale.”

 Regina stepped next to Rich, her jaw set, eyes already glistening. “For God’s sake, you were his damn coach.” Regina shook the glove at him. “How can you get rid of it?”

 “Since when do I have to ask you if I want to sell our son’s baseball glove?” Rich hadn’t asked her because he knew the answer. Whether the glove sat in a closet, on a counter, or anywhere else, it would never go away. The glove had been everywhere. Lying on the dashboard on the way home from games. Next to Kyle’s pillow while he slept. On Kyle’s head when he was clowning around. It even had a name: Wilson, like Tom Hanks’ volleyball in Cast Away. The glove had turned radioactive, poisoning Rich in its presence.

 There was no answer he could give her. He had the same pain, although Rich had shuttered his while Regina spontaneously broke down over a photo, a favorite family meal, or the basket of fresh laundry still sitting on Kyle’s floor.

 Tears dotted Regina’s flannel shirt. She turned and sat on the garage stair with the glove clutched to her chest, weeping.

 Rich shut his eyes. He couldn’t convey how leaden each step of his day was, from rising out of bed, to slumping back on a mattress that did not comfort him.

 They hadn’t been able to agree on much for months. When he was up, she was down, as if they were riding separate roller coasters. Rich sat next to Regina on the step and put his arm around her, and everything in his heart burst. He couldn’t bury it, or run from it, and boxing it up hadn’t worked either. They cried until Rich’s breathing slowed, and he dragged his palm across his face to wipe the tears. They perched on the stair, motionless for several minutes. “We have to do this together,” he said.

 “I guess so,” Regina said. Her eyes were red wells and tears curled around her lip.

 “Hold on.” Rich got up from the stair and grabbed a Kleenex from a box on a shelf over the washing machine in a corner of the garage. “Here.” He handed her a Kleenex.

 Regina wiped her eyes and crumpled the Kleenex on the floor, but her nose kept running. “I need more.”

 Rich got up and brought the box over.

 Regina grabbed several Kleenex, wadded them to her face, and held them there. The glove was cradled in her arm. “Is this ever going to get better?”

 “I don’t know. I wish I did.” He looked her in the eyes and kissed her on the forehead. He pulled two Kleenex from the box, wiped his eyes, and blew his nose.

 Noise outside the garage startled them. A face appeared, straining to see through the translucent window in the garage door. Someone said, “Are they open?” Another person answered, “My watch says 9:05, they should be.”

 Rich asked Regina, “Are we open?”

 “I suppose so.” Regina swallowed. “Give me a minute, okay?” She turned the glove over in her hand and ran her fingers along the stitching. Regina traced the initials on the webbing, before handing the glove to Rich.

 Rich offered his free hand to Regina. She stood up, and he hugged her. Brushing the hair back from her face, he wiped a stray tear with his thumb. The doorbell rang—the garage-salers were growing restless. “Okay, then,” he said.

 Rich placed the glove next to the ping-pong paddles, his hand lingering over it for a second. He stepped away and stood next to the button for the garage door opener and looked at Regina.

 She nodded.

 The door rumbled open, and Rich sheltered his eyes from the morning’s bright light.