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Blackballed

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I recently had my first encounter with the game of racket ball. The fact that I was totally unfamiliar with the game didn't deter me from accepting my friend Mary's invitation to play with her. After all, how difficult can it be to swat a little ball against a wall?

After a skimpy explanation of the rules, Mary suggested that we do some practice play. She heaved a service against the front wall which sliced a Z through the air as it ricocheted left-right-left and came to rest only after missing my nose by one-sixteenth of an inch. Standing studded and immobile before my smiling friend, I stammered an explanation about not being ready.

My first attempt to serve was followed by a hasty examination of my racket, which to my surprise was complete with strings. Ball two dribbled off the end of my racket and rolled gently to the wall before me. With my determination screwed down tightly, I prepared to return Mary's serve. As I flailed the air in search of that elusive creature which seemed to calculate my every move, I somehow lost footing and took a thunderous spill that echoed back at me from every mocking wall.

I spurned Mary's attempt to comfort my wounded ego and stood to my feet with a new strategy in mind. I would calmly watch the ball as it whizzed around the room; then I would carefully swoop my racket under it just as it bounced from the floor. My plan was a good one, but it backfired (literally) when Mary's next service rebound bulleted directly toward me. I absorbed the blow graciously, forced a grimaced smile, fixed my gaze on the black, round monster lying motionless on the floor, and backed slowly from the room.

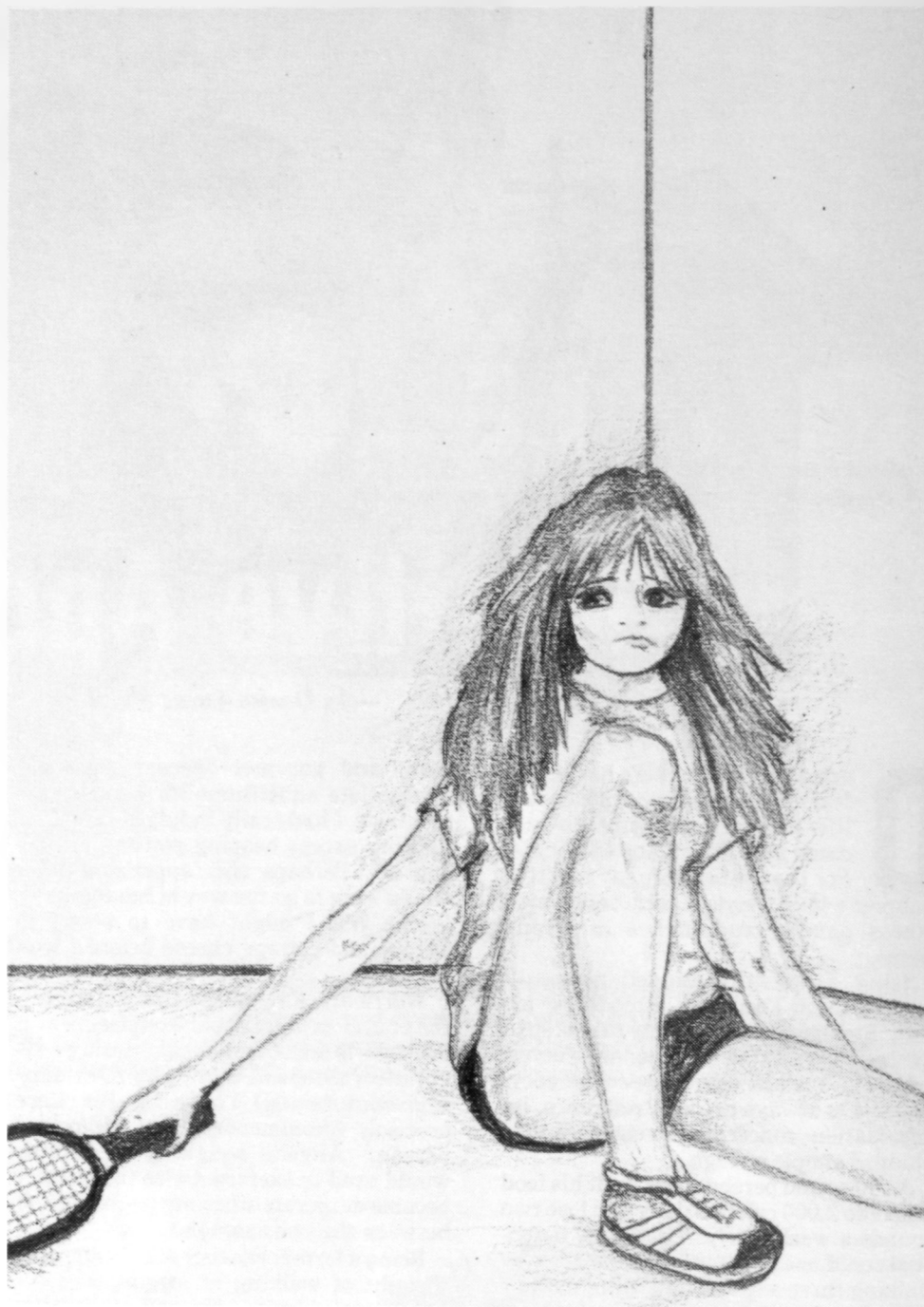


ILLUSTRATION BY: Cyndee Habikott

BLACKBALLED

by Patsy Evans