Doey Overies . . . So it Goes

by Jason_Love

Doey Overies I'm teaching my wife how to play tennis. We joined a club across the street. We're members, darling.

Now, Yahaira is pretty competitive as women go. When she loses a game of Uno, she's likely to attack. Teeth first. Her whole family is like that. Aunt Ena hasn't spoken to us since that Pictionary fight last Christmas.

So while I teach Yahaira the ropes -- or the net as it were -- I take care to be gentle. She is, after all, wielding a racquet.

For months we just rallied, and I loved it. It felt great to put away the score and just play. The object wasn't to win points but to return the ball. After a while, we developed an almost sexual rhythm, and did I tell you we're trying to make a baby?

Then one day when Yahaira was feeling mean and lean, the inevitable arrived: "I'm ready to keep score."

Of course, in tennis that's a class in itself. You start with love, which really means zero, always serving from the right. The first two points are worth 15, but the third is worth ten. Then there's deuce, ad in, ad out...

Yahaira decided to let me keep score.

I won the first set 6-0, and Yahaira swallowed it. She didn't curse, she didn't pout, she didn't threaten my person. I was so proud. I mentioned in my lightest-hearted voice that a 20-year head start should count for something.

In return for her pluck, I kept the ball in play and didn't try any funny stuff. When her shots were going deep, I played them as a courtesy. I gave her the "close enough" call. Did I tell you we are trying to make a baby?

It was in the middle of a long point -- I remember clearly -- when Yahaira posed a question that would set a precedent for all future matches: "Can I take that one over?"

I tilted my head like the RCA dog.

"What do you mean," I said. "Like a mulligan?"

"Yeah, a doey overy."

That baby voice. It gets me every time. She could make me light myself on fire with that voice. What the heck? How can a "doey overy" be bad?

We replayed the point. I double-faulted.

We have since encountered several hundred doey overies, most of which occur at match point. To Yahaira's credit, she always has a reason...

There was the time she had an itch on her foot -- you know, where you have to take the shoe off. There was the time that her mind was on the ball rolling around in the corner. And, oh yes, there was that time when, bless her heart, she was concerned that I wasn't getting enough exercise.

"You want to take the point over because I'm not getting a workout."

"If I keep hitting it right to you, you'll get bored and not want to play anymore."

So it goes.

The only problem is that Yahaira learns quickly. Dominicans have something in their veins. Yesterday we were at deuce (tied for those of you who don't speak tennis). Yahaira hit one into outer space, somewhere near Sirius. I could tell she was upset on account of the growling, when she reached into her bag of tricks.

"Can I take it over?" she said.

"And why, might I ask?"

"Because you were talking."

"I said, 'Good shot.'"

"It distracted me."

When I saw those pouty puppy dog eyes, I knew I had to be strong. I summoned the most powerful part of my being and told her straight up, "Okay, but it's the last time."

Where will the madness end? Before each serve, I go through a checklist to protect myself against the dreaded doey overy.

No leafs are blowing anywhere.

Check.

Her zipper is closed.

Check.

My zipper is closed.

Check.

She is completely set and 100% ready for me to serve the ball.

Check.

I don't know why I'm so tense. It's just a game, right? Maybe it will be a relief when it happens -- when the student overtakes the teacher. And when that day comes, I'll remind her of all those doey overies I gave her. Then I'll ask if we can stop keeping score.

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