



Mean Rocky

by George Shea

What? Are you crazy? You're wasting your time! He hates kids!" "I don't care," said Eddie. "I'm going to get it."

My friend Eddie usually gets what he wants. Eddie collects autographs. He gets famous baseball players to sign their names for him. They sign them in his autograph book. They sign them on scorecards and baseballs. Sometimes they just sign them on pieces of paper. Eddie saves all of them. He has a big collection.

But he didn't have Mean Rocky Dean's autograph. Maybe nobody did. Rocky *never* gave autographs.

"I'm going to get Rocky's," he said. "I'll get it this Saturday."

"You haven't got a chance," I said. I really didn't think he had a chance. Mean Rocky Dean was the meanest guy in baseball. He really was. He was *always* getting into trouble.

But Mean Rocky was a **terrific** ballplayer. Last year, Rocky hit 42 home runs. He also hit 16 other players. He started 17 fights, 6 of them turned into riots, and he was thrown out of 22 games.

Rocky hated umpires. He hated pitchers. He hated everybody he played against. (Some people said he even hated everybody he played *with*.) He hated newspaper reporters. He hated TV reporters too. Once, he hit one over the head with a microphone.

And he hated kids, especially kids who asked for autographs. Once a kid **shoved** an autograph book through the window of Rocky's car. Rocky tore up the book.

"The guy's a monster," I said. "He'll eat you alive!"

"I don't care," said Eddie. "I'm going to get his autograph."

"How are you going to get it?" I asked.

"Don't worry. I'll get it," he said. "You can help me."

"You're crazy," I said.

I didn't know how crazy Eddie was until that Saturday.

Eddie and I went to the game together. On the way, Eddie pointed out Mean Rocky's car to me. It was in a parking lot next to the ballpark. "That's where we'll wait for him after the game," Eddie told me.

"I just hope Rocky has a good game," I said. "If he has a good game, then maybe he'll feel good. Then maybe he'll be nice to us."

"Yeah," said Eddie. "Maybe."

Maybe nothing. Rocky had a terrible game. He struck out three times and he dropped a fly ball. In the ninth inning, he came to bat with the bases loaded. He hit into a double play and his team lost the game. He was awful. I think it must have been the worst game of his life.

"Forget about it," I said, as we left the ballpark. "Now he'll give us grief for sure. It isn't worth it—for one stupid autograph."

"It is for Rocky's," said Eddie. "That's one important autograph. *Nobody* ever gets Rocky's autograph. But *I* will."

We headed for Rocky's car. "Here," said Eddie. He handed me a key.

"What do I do with this?" I asked.

"Just put it in your pocket," he said.

We got to Rocky's car. Eddie took out a long steel chain. It had a lock at the end of it. He ran the chain around his body a few times. There was still a lot of chain left over.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"I'm chaining myself to Rocky's car," he said.

Now I really wanted to run. Eddie really was nuts. Rocky came along. Sure enough, he was really friendly.

"Hey, punk, get away from the car!" he said to Eddie.

"Not until I get an autograph," said Eddie.

"I'll give you an autograph—right in the mouth!" said Rocky. He took a step toward Eddie. "Now get away from my car!"

"I can't!" said Eddie. "See, I'm *chained* to it. My friend's got the key. Just sign an autograph and my friend will unlock the lock. See, just sign."

Rocky didn't sign the book. Well, not right away, anyway.

What he did do was wrap the loose end of the chain around Eddie's neck. He pulled on it—just a little. He wasn't really hurting Eddie. But Eddie was scared.

"Now unlock the chain, punk!" Rocky shouted.

I couldn't take it anymore. The whole thing was nuts. Eddie was nuts. Rocky was nuts. I *had* to stop it.

"Rocky!" I yelled. "Take it easy. I've got the key. I'll unlock it right now!" I held up the key and started to walk toward the car. Rocky loosened his grip on the chain.

Just then, a couple of newspaper reporters came by. They had cameras. One of them said, "Hey! It's Rocky Dean!"

"Who's the kid, Rocky?" one of the reporters asked. He held up his camera to take a picture.

Now the last thing Rocky wanted was his picture in the paper, especially a picture of him choking a kid. Suddenly Rocky let go of the chain. He smiled and put his arm around Eddie.

"The kid's a



good friend of mine," he said.

Rocky shook Eddie's hand. The reporters started taking pictures. Eddie was smiling. He and Rocky were smiling like crazy. They really looked like good friends.

"What's that chain for?" one of the reporters said.

"Just a little joke," said Rocky.

He and Eddie laughed. I couldn't believe what happened next. Eddie handed Rocky his autograph book. Rocky *signed* it. I couldn't believe it. I unlocked the chain.

Rocky closed the book and handed it back to Eddie. We were all still grinning away like crazy. Rocky got into his car. "Good luck, everybody!" he called out. Then he drove away.

The reporters stayed around.

"Hey, is Mean Rocky *really* a friend of yours?" one of them asked.

"Oh, sure," said Eddie. "See?" He held up the autograph book. "He just signed my autograph book!"

"Hey, that's right!" said a reporter. "That's big news! Rocky has never given an autograph before! Let's get a picture of that autograph!"

"Sure!" said Eddie proudly. He held up the book for the cameras. He opened it to where Rocky had signed.

There it was—in Rocky's own handwriting:

Donald Duck



LOOKING FOR FACTS IN THE STORY.
How well can you find facts in a story? Put an *x* in the box next to the right answer.

- Eddie wanted to get Mean Rocky Dean's
 a. bat.
 b. glove.
 c. autograph.
- Eddie chained himself to
 a. a fence.
 b. a seat in the park.
 c. Rocky's car.
- Rocky said that Eddie was his
 a. friend.
 b. enemy.
 c. brother.
- Rocky let the reporters
 a. ride in his car.
 b. take pictures of him with Eddie.
 c. shake his hand.

x 5 =
NUMBER CORRECT YOUR SCORE

EXAMINING VOCABULARY WORDS.
Here are four vocabulary questions. Put an *x* in the box next to the right answer. The vocabulary words are printed in **boldface** in the story. You may look back at the words before you answer the questions.

- Eddie had a big collection of players' names. A **collection** is
 a. a letter from someone.
 b. a player's cap.
 c. a group of things.
- Rocky hit 42 home runs. He was terrific. The word **terrific** means
 a. very bad.
 b. very good.
 c. very young.
- A kid shoved an autograph book through the window of Rocky's car. The word **shoved** means
 a. signed.
 b. pushed.
 c. closed.
- Rocky had a poor game. That was a reason for grief. When you feel **grief**, you feel
 a. sad.
 b. lucky.
 c. happy.

x 5 =
NUMBER CORRECT YOUR SCORE

ADDING WORDS TO A PARAGRAPH.
Complete the paragraph below. Fill in each blank with one of the words in the box. Each word appears in the story. There are five words and four blanks, so one word in the box will not be used.

Every _____
1
thousands of people travel to
Cooperstown, New York. They go
there to visit a _____
2
museum, the National Baseball
Hall of Fame. In the Hall are
_____ of the greatest
3
players who ever lived. You can
also see the gloves, the caps,
and the bats of some of the
_____.
4

baseball pictures year
window players

x 5 =
NUMBER CORRECT YOUR SCORE

READING BETWEEN THE LINES.
These questions will help you think critically. You will have to think about what happened in the story, and then figure out the answers. Put an x in the box next to the right answer.

- Which sentence is true?
 - a. Mean Rocky always played well.
 - b. Mean Rocky never signed autographs.
 - c. Mean Rocky liked everyone.
- Eddie thought that Rocky would give him an autograph if Eddie
 - a. begged for it.
 - b. paid him for it.
 - c. agreed to unlock the chain.
- When Eddie saw the name that Rocky wrote, Eddie probably felt
 - a. pleased.
 - b. excited.
 - c. disappointed.
- It is fair to say that Mean Rocky
 - a. tricked Eddie.
 - b. helped Eddie.
 - c. liked Eddie.

x 5 =
NUMBER CORRECT YOUR SCORE

NOTING STORY ELEMENTS.
Some story elements are **plot**, **character**, **setting**, and **mood**. Put an x in the box next to the right answer.

- What happened last in the *plot*?
 - a. Mean Rocky smiled and put his arm around Eddie.
 - b. Eddie and his friend went to a baseball game.
 - c. Mean Rocky struck out.
- Which word *characterizes* Rocky?
 - a. helpful
 - b. friendly
 - c. unfriendly
- What is the *setting* of the story?
 - a. a newspaper office
 - b. the parking lot by a baseball field
 - c. Eddie's house
- What is the *theme* of the story?
 - a. Some baseball players are very nice.
 - b. Two boys go to a baseball game.
 - c. A boy's plan to get an autograph fails.

x 5 =
NUMBER CORRECT YOUR SCORE

THINKING MORE ABOUT THE STORY.
Your teacher might want you to write your answers.

- ◆ Were you sorry that Eddie didn't get Mean Rocky Dean's autograph? Why?
- ◆ Should Rocky have signed his real name in Eddie's autograph book? Explain.
- ◆ Suppose that you were one of the reporters at the scene. Would you have written a story about what happened? Give reasons for your answer.

Use the boxes below to total your scores for the exercises. Then write your score on pages 138 and 139.

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<input type="text"/>	+	N OTING STORY ELEMENTS
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