

Nick Tancredi was a risky pick, and Casey Carradine was not usually one for risk. Nick: aging outfielder with a creaky shoulder, whose batting average had hovered around two hundred for the month of June? Risky. No—*dumb*.

Casey typed his name, deleted it again, cried, “Gah!” at her monitor. Nevertheless, she had a feeling about him. And, more importantly, she had twelve minutes before the five p.m. deadline for her weekly fantasy baseball column and she needed to recommend *somebody*.

But what if it didn’t work out? What if Nick went 0 for 36 in the next series? What if her readers, some of whom used her recommendations when betting actual money on Daily Fantasy Sports, filled her comments section with derisive all-caps? What if Casey was exposed as the fraud she secretly knew she was? What if Fantasy-Baseball.com fired her and she lost one of the best things in her life, the thing that was just for her; her secret—her lifeline, sometimes?

“What would KC do,” Casey muttered aloud in her office.

*I’d trust myself*, KC whispered in the back of her brain.

So Casey took a deep breath and hammered out, at speed: *For your outfielder pick, place your bets on the Cleardale Mustangs. They’re galloping toward a playoff berth and the Florida Jacks couldn’t stop the Mustangs if they came at ’em with lassos; nay (neigh?), stun guns. I recommend corralling as many Mustangs as you can, but if you have room for just one in your stable, rope in right-fielder Nick Tancredi. He’s the dark horse to bet on this week.*

She double-checked Nick’s stats, then before returning to the column, couldn’t resist a glance at his player photo. “Don’t let me down, Nick,” she muttered at him. Most players’ pictures showed them smiling goofily—so thrilled to be in the big leagues!—but not Nick: dark-haired, dark-eyed, beautiful Nick was as stony-faced as ever. There was a parody account on Chattr called @DidNickTancrediSmileToday. The page consisted of a string of “No”s.