

PROLOGUE: After she had finished, everyone was silent for a time. A few people smiled upon reflecting on what she had said. Her story had ended on a pleasant thought, which was just what everyone needed while being trapped on a subway.

A while later, Carson spoke up. "I liked that story," he began. "it reminded me of home. I think I know the kind of people you were talking about. Heh, there are a few in every crowd I suppose. Do you want to hear my story?" Several people close by nodded silently, so Carson took a deep breath and began his tale.

TALE: I'll always remember the questions that plagued me as I grew up. Why couldn't she have just understood me when I left that day; why couldn't we have left each other on good terms? I was often tormented by my inability to forget anything and question everything. As my friends grew up around me and, inevitably, away from me, I wondered what it was about them that left them so happy. A few times, I thought I knew. I remember how we used to stay up until odd hours of the night laughing hysterically at the TV and each other. I used to sit back at their parties and watch in awe as they got drunk and made consummate fools and messes of themselves, but I never felt sorry for them. Maybe I should have, but I never did because they were only doing what they wanted to be doing. They were only being themselves and weren't ashamed of it.

I wished I could discover the secret behind that. It seemed to me that the people I vested the most trust in wanted change; they wanted me to be more than I was, always searching me for deep thoughts and feelings. I loved the way my friends could just shrug that off in ways I never could and just act as they wished, free from pressure. It was that freedom I admire the most in them, though I was often told they were losers. Well, I was never pulling to win anyway.

I felt blessed to know the people I did while I was growing up. I suppose I still do, though some time apart has given me the chance to reflect on some of our experiences. Over the course of our time together, I watched them search for happiness, like anyone would, and make a few very poor decisions. Everybody wants to be happy, but sometimes we let that want cloud our better sense of judgment. In some people, this manifests itself as a form of passive self-abuse, if you will. They throw caution to the wind and allow the world to have its way with them. Alternatively, they themselves may be the ones making use of other people. Maybe happiness can only be obtained at the detriment of others.

Perhaps happiness comes with a blissful state of ignorance and apathy. Maybe my biggest mistake growing up was caring too much. In any case, I learned by watching the people I cared about go through trials I couldn't face myself. I saw the way they reacted and noted what they kept and what they threw away. They say a man is judged by the friends he keeps, which is of course, representative of who he keeps and who he chooses to release.

Seven years ago Nathan was but a young man of 12. Summer had come and passed, which meant that school was beginning anew, but not the school he'd been going to. That particular autumn Nathan was enrolling in a new middle school, one recently built but not brand new. Going someplace new was met with anxiety in some, gleeful anticipation in others, and everyone else was simply indifferent. I'm sure you were already well aware of that though. Nathan approached this new venture with indifference, not afraid of the unknown because he knew no reason to be.

Previously, schooling had all been handled within one classroom with one teacher with one small group of peers. In the new school, the day was divided up into periods, each with different students and subjects, often in different ends of the building (by the middle of the year most people would be referring to it as "the complex," which is something of note, but not importance). Each day was preceded by a short homeroom, a classroom where the necessary management for each day was dealt with before classes began. Nathan, along with about twenty other students, was assigned to room number 104 for homeroom. Among those people were a few that would become pivotal characters in Nathan's story. Brandon, Tad, Joseph, & Les all came in and sat down at various intervals early that morning, Tad the first, Joseph the last. They all came in with bags, but no one came in with baggage. They were, at least in a relative sense, wonderfully blank canvases. How they became acquainted is unimportant; it should suffice

to say that by the end of the week, the bunch of them knew each other comfortably.

It's silly the way we ask questions when trying to get to know someone. With a more casual approach, you may learn more pertinent information about somebody else's nature simply through their disposition than one would ever learn by inquiring into their opinion of Matchbox Twenty. Nathan was a character in the bud. He was smart but willingly and joyfully foolish. Some people could describe him as sweet and well-intentioned, others could describe him as reckless and attention seeking. Either way, he possessed the confidence of a natural performer, and was shameless enough to attempt most anything if it solicited laughter. Not that he was rude; he was very polite most of the time, or at least when it mattered.

Brandon was a very quiet child with a loud and oddly high-pitched laugh. He loved being the center of attention, but hated asking for it. He always relished the moments it happened to fall on him. He was typically polite, but on occasion would let his mouth run away with him. Why this was a bad habit of his is a little complicated; maybe he'd just choose unfavorable moments to assert his intellect. Maybe he'd just choose unfortunate moments to let go of his inhibitions. Maybe he'd just simply try too hard to emulate the comedic, confident friends he longed to be more like. The group liked him, but no one considered him a best friend, merely someone they happened to know who was reliable and meant well.

Tad was a funny mix of insecurity and flamboyance. He knew the shamelessness that allowed other people to be silly and goofy but did so less out of wanting to make other people laugh and more out of wanting other people to like him. Tad was also, aside from Brandon, one of the more sympathetic characters of this story.

Joseph was a large boy, tall and wide, but with a high voice that only fit his body when you heard it from him in person. He was very kind in actuality, but he had a tactless way of communicating with people. He also had a very dark sense of humor; things and subjects that would grossly offend most people he found hilarious. Perhaps he just didn't take anything seriously. He shared a common characteristic with Tad and Brandon: rather than express anger or sorrow, he was more likely to just withdraw.

Les was a quiet child, actually quieter than Brandon, but somehow he wasn't known for it the way Brandon was. Les had a confrontational sense of humor; he loved to push someone jokingly and say "What now?!" often expecting to be pushed back or taunted in return, and he was often satisfied. Les was lucky to find a group of friends like the ones he did; a different combination of people might not have been so sympathetic to his odd disposition. In a way, they admired Les for his reckless ways. His secondary male characteristics were unusually developed for a child his age; on more than one occasion he was able to purchase pornography from a local gas station without a hitch because he was

assumed to be older than he was. Brandon had a similar situation, but never took advantage of it the way Les did.

Most of their middle school career is unimportant, but a few occurrences are of note. Brandon, Nathan, & Joseph were all involved in the school's music program, Brandon & Joseph in the marching band, Nathan in the string orchestra. Les started to play the electric bass during this time, too, but didn't let anyone know about it. Brandon had been playing electric guitar in addition to the saxophone for years and Joseph was a drummer. From their time in the program the three took a great interest in music that would provide a further connection for them later. The only other thing of interest from their time in middle school is Brandon's experience with girls that, in retrospect, was both ironic and invaluable.

For reasons he never really came to understand, Brandon was pursued by several girls, all of whom possessed a strong devotion to religion, something Brandon would find toxic in later years. It was funny that, of all people, they should choose to pursue Brandon since he was one of the most happily lonely people in the school. In fact, after a time, he found the attention to be annoying and hated it, but that didn't stop him from giving relationships a try many times over. The only one that lasted beyond a few weeks and was really taken seriously was his relationship with Andrea, who seemed to come out of nowhere during the final months of ninth grade.

She'd recently moved to the city with her mother after her parents' divorce and happened to first meet Brandon on a day when he was particularly candid and vocal, and strangely, also genuinely funny. He made her laugh and seemed kind for no good reason other than that he felt like it. They shared the same English class, a class with a teacher who was a poetry enthusiast. Every other week they would have to write poetry anonymously to be read by somebody else. Shortly after meeting Brandon, Andrea found herself reading his poetry in front of the class. She was lonely in the new school and impressed by Brandon's kindness and skill with poetic phrases; needless to say, she carried a devoted crush on him up until June, when she asked him to be her boyfriend. Flattered and curious, Brandon obliged, also a bit turned on by her up-front nature (a trick he'd yet to learn). The relationship was a blessing at first. She knew how to not violate his need for solitude and provided an ear for his musical excursions. To summarize the situation without bothering to be creative, she made him feel special and more importantly, needed. It was that need, however, that would wear out the relationship and his trust in her that would create betrayal later.

The first year of high school came upon the crew like it does most everyone else. The summer was spent lackadaisically; the only thing of interest happening was Les's relationship with Elena. Elena lived with her mother, who had divorced her father years ago and had chosen not to date around. Elena was young enough to not clearly remember her father, but old enough to miss him

anyway. So she spent much of her childhood with a feeling of missing fulfillment, a longing for male attention she didn't quite realize she had. So, when she got together with Les, she was head over heels immediately. Elena was a kind-hearted woman; she was pleasant to converse with and eager to please. That was, of course, also her biggest downfall. She was so eager to please that her own personal feelings were often tossed away for the sake of keeping Les happy. When she was with other people Elena was very assertive, actually possessing a bit of a commanding presence, but when she was with Les, she submitted to anything he had in mind. She seemed to rationalize this with a feeling of love she often spoke about with a sense of wonder. I wondered if she was telling us how much she loved Les, or if she was trying to convince herself.

Stacy had known Joseph since they were young children, meeting in the daycare she now worked at after school. Stacy was an extremely quiet child, shy beyond almost all belief, hiding a kind personality often amazed at the world's lack of compassion. She'd had a brief relationship with Kartson in middle school that had turned out disastrously and nearly swore her off of relationships forever. Stacy was going through her gothic phase at the time, dressed in black from head to toe and often ornamented by spikes and metal objects placed by her joints. Rarely far from her neck was a pair of headphones, usually loaded with an obscure underground hardcore band or The Cure. I smile now looking back at it, how far she's come since then, usually wondering if she feels the same. Karston was short, a tad pudgy, and insecure. Also going through his gothic phase, he

met Stacy in seventh grade and came to admire her, so much that he convinced her to date him behind her mother's back, since she had forbidden it until Stacy was older. Kartson could certainly be described as a persistent character, but also one with a spiteful side.

Their relationship ended while Karston was out with friends at a concert while Stacy was at a mutual friend's party. Also attending the party was Joseph, who, when she walked in, was doing the worm on the floor. Stacy laughed longer and harder when she was with Joseph than she did with anyone else, especially since his sense of humor was, more often than not, self-deprecating. He was able to joke about his insecurities in ways Stacy hadn't ever learned to, and she loved that about him. "Hey, what are you doing here, I'm surprised you came. Where's Karston?" he asked of her when they met. "Probably beating in somebody's head in a pit" Stacy responded in earnest.

"Oh, is that what the kids call it nowadays? Back in my day, we just called it cor--"

"Joe! Shush!" knowing where he was going with that thought, Stacy thought it would be better to stop him. Joseph held no animosity against Karston, he just poked fun at just about anything he could, often all at once. This was the first time they had been alone without Karston for some time, so the two left the party early to get re-acquainted. "Karston's a little distant," Stacy confessed. "I mean, he's all right, but he leaves me a little lonely sometimes, and he takes up just about all of my time. I was kind of surprised that he didn't even ask me if I

wanted to go with him tonight. I mean, I didn't I hate AILD, but still. It's a little unsettling."

"Perhaps he knew you wouldn't want to come along, so he decided to save himself the trouble of asking you," Joseph submitted. "You think about that?"

"No, I'm stupid."

"Hah, no you're not," Joseph said with a quick slap on her shoulder. "Oh look Stacy – more graffiti's been drawn on the bridge. One of these days I'm going to learn that language and write back. Something classy, you know, like 'Word up homeslice; stop writing on the white man's bridge, dog'."

"Joseph," Stacy began, "that's terrible."

"I know that, you know I don't actually want to do that." Joseph responded with a nudge. They kept walking together until they arrived at Stacy's doorstep, mostly laughing all the way to it. "Well, all right, this is goodnight then" Joseph spoke as he leaned in for a hug, but received a kiss instead. It was a random act of confusion with no reason or rhyme to support; Stacy simply felt compelled. They said goodbye awkwardly afterward, and both spent the rest of the night pondering what had just happened.

If the aforementioned kiss wasn't Stacy's biggest mistake, then telling her friends about it was. Karston inevitably found out, and was distraught and disturbed. A few weeks later, after a time of continued peace together, Karston sent her a message reading:

I want you to know something. Last night I visited a friend of mine named Caroline.

We've known each other for a long time, but as I'd told you many times before, I only have eyes for you, Stacy. Well, after sometime together, we got bored, and got to talking, and to be honest, really turned each other on. We kissed, time and time again. She has such a strong tongue, it's amazing. She has this great way of running her hands along my spine when we embrace, it's electric. Most importantly, she's honest, and she actually listens to me, rather than sitting there like a lump. I'm telling you this, of course, so that you know how it feels. Goodbye, and go to hell.

Stacy blamed herself for the break up, and maybe she deserved to, but it really did break her spirits. If not, ironically, for Joseph's support, she may have given up on love entirely. She spent years searching for a forgiveness that eluded her, and she only found it with Joseph. In later days, she came to think that it was meant to be, and she was meant to be with him.

Like most people, after middle school, our group moved on to high school. Brandon was with Andrea, Joseph and Nathan were momentarily alone, Tad was alone, and Les was with Elena. They were all busy people, Brandon, Joseph, Nathan, and Les being involved with various bands throughout high school, Nathan and Tad also producing a weekly segment for the school AV club. "Have you heard about this website called 'Philanderers.com'? I can see the commercials for this one now, two people standing in a white space, happily holding hands, saying 'We've been having an affair for ten months now, and our spouses are clueless. Thank you, Philanderers.com!'" Nathan wrote often of current events, sometimes with a little of Brandon's help, since both

shared an interest in politics. “People, it’s not news when the vice-president mistakes a man for a quail while hunting, though maybe it does explain our foreign policy.” On more than one occasion the program landed Tad and Nathan in trouble with the staff. “People, the AV club needs donations. So, donate or I’ll hurt Tad! I’ll do it!” Nathan unfortunately joked. “What’ll you do about that?!”

“Probably cry”, Tad responded. It eventually became a slogan for T-shirts.

Halfway through tenth grade, Nathan met Violet. How they exactly crossed paths is unclear, but Nathan’s appearing on local TV every week probably had something to do with it. Violet loved to laugh and had a lot of patience, which I suppose was something of a necessity. They hit it off hard, going everywhere together. Perhaps there was something about him she deeply admired. This was one of those relationships with a lot of teasing, rather than flirting. At one point, Violet accidentally stabbed him with a pencil (yes, it drew blood) but he didn’t appear angered or bothered at all. Maybe it was simply a hormonal relationship, they did hang off each other a lot, but I never did quite understand what made them tick.

By the start of our senior year, Nathan and Violet were in deep, as were Les and Elena, Joseph and Stacy were just starting, and Brandon and Andrea were winding down. Over the years, Brandon had begun to feel worn out in the relationship, not tired of her as much as he was tired of it. He didn’t mind a challenge, but the constant feeling of having to impress exhausted him. Plus, at times, it seemed as if he could do no right. Once she told him plainly, “Take risks!

Don't be shy! Tomorrow, do something you've been worried about doing!"

Brandon hated taking risks with anything, especially with her since this was his first serious relationship. He was a perfectionist by nature; everything, he was determined, had to go right. Well, the next day, before they said goodbye in the morning, he planted a brief kiss on her forehead. They had been together several months by then, but the relationship had been anything but physical, Andrea instead seeking an entirely intellectual connection. Perhaps there is a certain value in that, but later that day she told him plainly to not do that again. "We're only 15" she said. "It's only been six months; it's way too soon for that." Brandon knew better than to argue, or press the issue, but was frustrated nearly beyond expression. It was one example of how she'd push him, only to tell him later how he'd failed. From his perspective, that is.

By December, Brandon had been avoiding her to a degree, no longer really interested, but not willing to end the relationship. It was Andrea, actually, who ended it, finally telling him one night how little he excited her. Feeling frustrated but oddly gratified, Brandon resolved to simply keep himself busy and bury what he had taken from the relationship in his mind. He was ruminating quietly on the bus ride home when Stacy turned to him and spoke from across the aisle. "I want to know what you think of this" she began. "I asked Joseph last night if we could still be friends if we broke up. He started freaking out and hasn't spoken to me all day. I've known him for ten years, Brandon; I don't want to throw that away in three months. I mean, the friendship

is more valuable, right? So we should still be on good terms if the relationship ends. Now I think it is over, and I just don't know what comes next. What happened? I want to ask him if we're still together, but I don't think he'll answer. What do you think I should do, Brandon?"

"Your question was hypothetical, right?" he asked.

"Yes, of course it was. I don't want to break up with him."

"Well, I think he took it as a subtle hint, I think he misunderstood, and I think he's scared. Before you do anything else, you should explain to him what you meant. Relationships can carry a lot of baggage going in and out." After he was done, she meekly sat in silence the rest of the way home, but the next day she and Joseph were walking arm in arm comfortably through the halls as they had been before.

Les and Elena's relationship was well known for its promiscuity. I recall one time, he chose to tell us in vivid detail some things they'd done in a graveyard. "Don't you go to hell for that?" Tad asked seriously. Les simply laughed and said nothing back. That's the way it often was until someone asked him how the relationship was going, and, unusually emotional and open, Les told us the bad news. "I'm scared out of my mind guys. Like, I've seriously never been this frightened in my entire life. She might be pregnant, guys, seriously. Her parents were at the movies last week, you know, for Valentine's Day, and I drove over to her house for our thing, and we were in her bedroom, and the condom broke; when I pulled out all I had on me was the ring. I had to get tested for

STD's and everything. You know how they do that? They show you all this pornography so you get a hard on, then they shove a q-tip in it." For a time, all we could really do was stare.

Later on in the day, on the bus ride home, Les seemed to be searching for relief. "It's really not that big a deal right? I mean, so what if she gets pregnant, she can just have an abortion, right? It's her right to do that, no big deal." Brandon simply winced and said nothing, thinking about his relationship with Andrea. He knew that if they'd have been sexually active, and she'd have gotten pregnant, he would have been a father. Watching what Les was going through was just like watching a mirror image, where everything is reversed.

It was actually Tad who spoke up, saying "Do you really believe that? Are you really sure you're comfortable with that?"

"Of course, dude" Les said casually. Nobody brought the subject up, but it was assumed that she'd gone through with the procedure, evidenced by Les's return to his usual state of mind and disposition. Ironically, their relationship seemed damaged beyond repair by the incident. Elena would often complain to her friends that Les didn't show her the attention he used to, sometimes ignoring her altogether. Within a month she was seeing someone else, and the relationship had been dissolved. Two people who had once billed themselves as husband and wife broken up over a baby! There's something about that. Nathan, Brandon, Les, and Joseph formed a band in their senior year of high school. The music was pretty typical of what you would expect from male adolescents; loud, fast,

heavy, and a little obnoxious. Brandon named the band “Silent Poetry,” in reaction to Nathan and Les’s other band, “Arduous Flatulence.” (It was a joke band in which nothing was sacred.) They’d rehearse often, working towards a gig on New Year’s Eve. Occasionally, they’d invite friends over to rehearsal, bringing about much moshing, staining, bleeding, and usually alcohol consumption. From where and how they got the alcohol is a spot of speculation to me, but someone was usually found passed out and scribbled on with a marker. I remember talking to Nathan during one such party when he’d gone outside for a cigarette (illegal for him to obtain, but not to smoke). “Hard habit to quit,” he said, “but then again, who cares? All I really think about is tomorrow anyway.”

“At least you’ve stopped smoking weed” I poked.

“Oh yeah, weed is for girly-men. That’s why I do crack!” he laughed as he said this. “I’m kidding, I’m kidding. No crack. But did you know it’s legal to possess up to 30 grams of marijuana in Germany? You can usually get away with a gram in America too, but what’s the point in that? Illegal to obtain, but not to possess; funny, right? ‘But officer, this joint fell from the sky and landed in my mouth!’ It’s like that switchblade law we were talking about last week.”

“Hey Nate,” Les spoke from behind us, “Sam wants to know where the pretzels are.”

“They’re under the cupboard, I think. Be careful that he doesn’t pull a

George Bush on us like he did last time. I thought we had a dead man on our hands.”

“That is so cold, I’ll tell him” Les walked away.

“You know, Nathan, this whole thing about the UAE controlling our ports has got me nervous. I don’t know how to feel – I don’t like that we are, essentially, handing the keys over to the terrorists, but at the same time I feel like a racist for thinking that.” I spoke shyly.

“I know dude, it sucks donkey. I think I’d kind of feel hesitant about it if it were any other nation, too, though. Especially Canada. Curling is not a sport. Period.” Nathan dragged on his cigarette one last time before throwing it away.

“Hey guys!” Tad called from behind. “Wanna see me do a back flip?!”

“Um, no, you’d better not.” Nathan responded. Tad shrugged with an “Okay” and walked back inside.

“So, how are things going with Violet?” I asked innocently.

“Oh it’s going great man.” Nathan returned. “Yesterday was our anniversary, and we had it all planned out. We went out to the movies, then we were going to go back to my place and have some champagne, but we chose instead to just drive up into the hills and do it there instead. Much more fun, but I won’t elaborate.” I winced a bit at this thought. Do people ever learn anything?

“I notice that you’ve been introducing each other as husband and wife lately” I began.

“Yeah, don’t think too much of it, okay?” Nathan seemed eager to cut me

off. "It's...it's like this. We're planning on getting married; we just didn't want to wait until then to start screwing. It's better like this."

"Hey, are you guys sober?" Les had returned.

"Yeah, we're sober." I knew I was, I was assuming Nathan was too.

"Good, 'cause everyone else is plastered. Tad's probably got a concussion; you guys have to drive him to the hospital. I'm calling to let them know you're coming."

Joseph and Stacy usually greeted each other with a hug, and said goodbye with a quick peck of a kiss. "Awww" Violet took notice one day. "You guys are so cute, being all reserved and such in public."

"It's not just public" Joseph explained. "We're like that all the time. We're just really taking things slow, being physical isn't something that's really important to us. I'd much rather just make her laugh anyway, and it's easier to talk when your lips are free." Violet gave a smile and said no more. Joseph wasn't lying. His relationship with Stacy wasn't hormonal at all. Perhaps it wasn't a conscious choice as much as it was the two just following their own nature and happening to be united by it. Neither of them was religious by any means, but perhaps there are some feelings that are considered religious purely by coincidence only. The last I heard, they were still happy together.

A week before New Year's Eve, Silent Poetry was practicing, waiting for Nathan to show up. He wasn't usually late, so it was strange enough to begin with. I had been enlisted by the band as a roadie, so I was attending the rehearsal

to get an inventory of their equipment. I had just about worked through Joseph's drum set when Nathan came in, looking ruffled. Saying nothing, he picked up his microphone and joined in on the song. The band was working on a cover of Queensryche's "Silent Lucidity," at Nathan's request as a song for Violet. Practice went on with a slight discomfort, as if everyone was on edge about something. The feeling was ignored until afterward, when I asked Nathan why he was late. "You probably don't want to hear it dude."

"Well, I did ask, but you don't have to answer."

"No, I'll answer. Violet might be pregnant. We were a little drunk and I forgot to use a condom. I pulled out, but, we're still scared. She hasn't bought a pregnancy test yet; I think she's in denial. I'm just kind of numb." He was absent from school several days that week, attending classes only on Tuesday and Friday. I didn't tell anyone and nobody brought it up until New Year's Eve. Nathan didn't arrive for the sound-check, so I checked his mic for him. Silent Poetry was last up, their last song scheduled to end right at midnight. Their set was abbreviated, only meant to fill up a half hour. The first two were fast and short, titled "Tongues of Fire" and "Waking on the Beach (In Blood)." "Walt Loves the Kids" and "Devil's Advocate" were slower and plodding, while "Habeus Corpus" was a return to the earlier aggression. "Silent Lucidity" was intended to serve as a lullaby and "Morning at Midnight" closed everything. Nathan finally arrived about fifteen minutes before the band was scheduled to start, and happened to bump into me first. "Is it Violet again?" I inquired.

“Yeah, we were on our way here and I stopped at Eckert’s. I just couldn’t stand it anymore; I made her buy a pregnancy test, one of those EPT things. She’ll be here later after she gets the results.”

“What if she’s pregnant? What will you do? Get her an abortion like Elena had?”

“I don’t know. A child’s a huge responsibility, but in a way I hope she is. I want the chance to own up to what we’ve done. Maybe we had it coming, being so reckless. After What Les and Elena went through, we talked about it, about what we’d do. I’ve just felt numb these past few days; we haven’t spoken at all. I’m trying to prepare myself for the worst, but that’s an awful way of describing a child.” The performance went on as planned, but Violet didn’t show up until after it was over. Her face was puffy, and it was all too clear what had happened: the test had come back positive. Nathan said nothing, he just held her.

After a few weeks, Violet left school to study privately at home, choosing to not let the whole student body see her as her pregnancy became more obvious. Nathan stood by her, pledging to finish out the semester, graduate, and then get a job. Violet would go to college; Nathan would pay the bills and watch their child (they named her Sofia). It was saddening to watch, but heroic in a sense too. Rather than say goodbye to their child and each other, they chose to remain together and welcome the child. They were married that autumn after Sofia was born in a simple ceremony, Tad serving as their best man.

After that, there's very little to speak of. Mostly, we all went our separate ways; off to whatever it was we had lined up. I know Brandon, Joseph, Les, and Nathan still see each other, choosing to continue with their band. The rest of us went off to college or the military. Joseph and Stacy are still together, and that brings me to the end of this tale. It's funny how much about ourselves we say through the friends we keep. Maybe losing them says just as much as keeping them.