

# **Haverford School**

# **Stories**

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Beginning Fiction Workshop Portfolio

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# Still There

Lancaster Avenue was covered with brown slush. The extreme caution taken by drivers resulted in traffic moving at a slug's pace, accompanied by a cacophony of honking horns. The usually bustling vessel of the Main Line was in stasis, taken hostage by the harsh winter. Marty and Todd, two old high school friends on their Winter Break, were sheltered in Minella's Diner, an establishment that was essentially the pit stop of the Main Line.

Minella's was your classic diner: waiters, booths, a bar area, the aroma of coffee and greasy American food, and music like something from a "Rocky" montage. Cool colors abound, with white and turquoise mostly dominating, with sunlight flushing in through the large windows and bouncing off of the tiled floor. Nearly every table was taken, and there was a constant stream of chatter from the mixed crowd of elderly, white folks and high school students. This place was old and familiar. This was the home that Marty and Todd had left behind.

"Can I get you anything else to drink?" asked a waitress.

"Uh, I'm fine with water," said Marty, twirling his glass of water around.

"Coke for me," said Todd.

"Sure, I'll be right back then," said the waitress who made her way to the kitchen.

"Jeez," said Marty, looking outside. "It's a mess out there. Wonder why they haven't salted the roads yet."

"Yeah, this whole place is going to shit," said Todd, adjusting his thick-rimmed glasses.

The two friends looked at the advertisement-laden paper placemats.

“Any new ones?” asked Marty.

“Oh, here’s one,” said Todd, pointing at one on the bottom left of the mat. He read out loud: “‘Dr. Handel, The Gentle Dentist. We *Handel* Your Teeth.’”

“God, that’s actually the worst,” said Marty, as they both chuckled. Todd ripped the ad off his placemat.

“This is going in the collection,” said Todd, as he pocketed the ad.

“So uh, speaking of ‘going to shit,’ you visit Haverford School since you’ve been back?” asked Marty, taking the wrapper off his straw.

“Yeah. It’s like a completely different place now, man. I walk in there and I don’t know a single kid. Bunch of brats,” said Todd, opening his menu. “The teachers basically told me that the seniors suck this year. When they aren’t trashing the library, you can catch them smoking weed down in Haverford College.”

The elderly couple in the booth behind them took offence overhearing this news.

“Jeez. We haven’t even been gone a full year yet and it’s become ‘Lord of the Flies’ over there,” said Marty.

The waitress returned to the booth, and handed a glass of Coke to Todd.

“We ready to order?” she asked.

“Yeah, I’ll have a grilled chicken Caesar salad, and a side of scrambled eggs,” said Todd.

“And, uh, I’ll have chicken strips and fries,” said Marty, who hadn’t even opened his menu.

“Okay, it’ll be right up!” said the waitress, taking their menus and heading off.

Todd beamed at Marty.

“Dude, that’s like, the same thing you order all the time,” said Todd.

“Well you know, gotta stay true to myself.”

“You’re telling me,” said Todd, looking at Marty. His attire consisted of a hoodie, jeans, and sneakers. “You look pretty much the same as I last saw you.”

“Well, at least I don’t look like a goddamn hipster,” joked Marty, who pointed out Todd’s new glasses, skinny jeans, sweater, and brown shoes. Todd chuckled.

“College does that to a guy,” he said.

“Hmm,” mumbled Marty. “Well speaking of, how’s your first year at Columbia?”

“Oh, dude. Fucking awesome, you don’t even know,” said Todd.

“Sick. What’re you doing over there?”

“Like, everything, man. Acapella, Film Club, pledging for a frat- I’m already working my way up the College Democrats club,” said Todd, enthusiastically.

“Neat. Neat.”

Then came the waitress and the food.

“Your salad and eggs-” she said, putting a plate in front of Todd. “-and your chicken strips and fries.” The moment Marty took a whiff of his lunch, he knew he was back home.

“Thanks,” they both said, as the waitress headed off.

“So, how are things up there at MIT?” asked Todd, taking his first bite.

“Umm, pretty good, I think. Writing for the student newspaper. And, you know, just homework and stuff,” said Marty, fry in hand.

“Pretty dope,” said Todd, chewing on his food.

“Yeah. I guess,” said Marty.

The two friends dug in. 1980's rock ballads made up for the silence as they enjoyed their meals.

"So, any women in your life?" Todd abruptly asked. Marty coughed and halted his chewing.

"Well, there's a non-sequitur for you," Marty said sarcastically. "What do you mean?"

"Get lucky over there?"

"Uh, no, not really," said Marty, playing with the fries on his plate. "To be honest, I'm still getting over- *you know*."

"Lisa, right?" said Todd. Marty sighed. He hadn't heard her name out loud in a long time. "Still there, huh?"

Marty shrugged, but very lightly nodded his head.

A pause.

"Talk to her recently?" asked Todd.

"No. You?"

"Not really. What makes you think I have?" asked Todd.

"Well, you were pretty friendly with her," said Marty. "Especially at the post-prom party."

"Hey look, we've already went through the apology and all-"

"It's okay. It's all over and done with," said Marty, drinking his water. "I don't even remember what happened the last time I saw her."

"That was probably at our crazy little 'end of the summer party,'" said Todd.

“Yeah. Though I sort of completely blacked out, remember? I don’t recall a thing about that night,” said Marty. Todd looked down at his half-finished salad. “But I’m guessing that you do,” said Marty.

Todd hesitated. “I hope this isn’t why you wanted to meet up today,” joked Todd, attempting to lighten the mood. Marty smiled in response. But he didn’t deny it. “Does it really matter what happened on some night *five months ago*?”

Another pause. Marty then spoke.

“I already know what happened. I overheard Lloyd and Vince talk about it.”

“Then why are you asking me then?”

“I want to hear it from you.”

“What the hell difference is it going to make if you hear it from me?”

“I hoped that you’d admit it yourself. You know how I feel about her.”

“*Feel*? As in present tense?”

“Whatever.”

“All right, all right, I admit it. Whatever those two said, they’re probably right. And I’m sorry you feel that way about it.”

“Not sorry you did it?”

“Jeez Marty, she wasn’t your girlfriend or anything. She never was.”

“But still.”

“Still what? Get over it, man. It’s done.”

“Stop.”

“You go to this awesome college now, you have a new life, this should be beneath you.”

“Please stop.”

“Stop what? You’re the one who’s got to stop living in the fucking past.”

In a flash, Marty slammed his hand on the table. The sound of the utensils shaking on their table halted all nearby conversations. Their waitress took notice of them. Marty covered his face with his left hand, as Todd simply glared at him.

“You’re right, Todd. It’s still there. But what can I do?”

One last pause.

“I don’t want to talk about this anymore,” said Todd. Marty nodded his head.

The waitress approached them.

“Is everything all right?” she asked.

The two did not respond at first. Marty looked at his placemat, trying to find comfort amidst the familiar imagery of absurd, outdated advertisements. But the comfort was no longer there. He looked outside the window towards Lancaster Avenue. He watched as a truck plowed the dirty, brown slush out of the way. The road was now clear.

“Yeah,” said Marty. “Everything’s fine.”