

You're Only Eighteen Once. Aren't You?

I never remember names. I remember other things, strange things, trivial things about people, the way they laughed, their favorite song, but I don't remember names. There are about fifteen names in my life and there probably always will be. Everyone else, well, they're lost.

I remember Tazz. But I only remember him because someone brought his name up in a conversation the other day. What I do remember is a lacrosse game we played against Wheeling College. I have the ball and I'm running down the sideline and Tazz is singing a B52's song -- the one where the guy sings: "What's that on your head?" And the girls reply: "A wig!"

"What's that on your head? A wig! What's that on your head? A wig! Woo, woo! What's that on your head." He's singing this over and over, even while he's breaking toward the goal motioning for me to pass the ball to him. And I call an "iso," and he draws the defenseman around the back of the goal perfectly, opening a lane for me to lose the big galoot of a defenseman who's riding me, and I take a shot on goal, and the net ripples as the ball hits it, and the ref blows his whistle and holds his hands above his head as he runs to the scorer's table and says, "goal, number thirty-nine, blue, unassisted." And Tazz is still singing "what's that on your head?" And if I close my eyes, I can still see the net flutter as my shot sneaks past the goalie's stick. That's the sweetest sight there is in lacrosse, the sweetest sight in the world.

Another example: I can't remember the name of the guy who used to ride down with me to games in my old Datsun 280ZX, but he'd smoke joints and I'd gun the motor as we flew around curves on sweet smelling spring days, traveling to small colleges in the Pennsylvania hills. If we could manage, we'd get beers before we left campus and drink them as we drove. There is no better feeling than driving back roads on the way to a game with the smell of spring in your nostrils and a beer in your hand on a Saturday morning when you're eighteen years old, and what's his name is smoking a joint sitting

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next to you in the passenger's seat.

I have made love to beautiful women; rich girls who make love to you wearing nothing but a strand of pearls, and girls whose daddies aren't rich, who wear nothing more than the natural beauty god gave them, and you know a god has to exist to have created such beautiful women, endowing them with little more than beauty and the deeper truths the debutante girls could never know.

But not even they could equal the smell of promise of a Spring morning when the grass is new and sweeter than summer corn, when the air smells of fresh earth and you're waiting to play lacrosse with a bunch of guys whose names you'll forget soon enough. And you know that feeling will stay with you for the rest of your life, like the fiery colors of autumn and the silent snowfalls of winter nights that never let you forget that you're only eighteen once in your life and you can never go back. Never.