

Out in the Street

by Anthony Van Hart

As kids, we grew up in a city that we swore was suburbia. Nearly every street had a few houses with a kid or two that was missing their front teeth.

There were kids we knew well and kids we'd wish we'd known but they lived a few steps further than we were allowed to go.

In college, I kissed a girl that grew up three houses away and across the street from my hooligan third grade best friend that would get the belt harder from his old man than most of us got it. And that girl - the one I kissed - lived that close since she was a baby. She went to private school and wasn't that smart.

All of us friends,

we'd play twilight baseball during the school year in whoever's yard had the shortest grass and quadruple headers in the summer — only taking breaks to eat peanut butter sandwiches and push ups.

When the light went out - we'd play bloody murder or ding dong ditch, hustling through alleys and in old people's yards until we were called home with a whistle or a shout.

(Being the heavy kid, I'd usually show up panting at the back door like the dog we never got to have.)

We all had good looking babysitters that made, even though it didn't matter how good it was, the best macaroni and cheese out of a box we ever had.

That neighborhood isn't suburbia anymore. Or maybe it never was. But our laughter and crooked smiles still breathe in the air and live underneath the sod in those backyards.

We still live there.

All of us.

