

All the Pretty Boys

by Lillian Ann Slugocki

It was the summer of 1987 when that batch of purple micro-dot came to town. Billy Spivak and his friends, all the pretty boys, bought it, and tripped every hot summer day for a month. I used to think Billy was sexy. He was the oldest brother of my best friend, Amy. He had long black shaggy hair, big white teeth and a body as skinny as a telephone pole. I wanted him to stick his tongue down my throat and feel me up, but he never did.

A lot of the neighborhood boys, including Billy, went crazy after dropping all that acid. There they were; long hairy legs poking out of blue jean cut-offs, hair falling like feathers around their faces, shoulders jutting out of tank tops. I would see them down at the public swimming pool, sitting by the concession stand, their faces blank, their pupils like headlights. I felt bad about Billy because he really was cute, but he got crazier and crazier, and then one day, I think it was August, he came down with leukemia.

He was committed to an institution for being crazy and sick, but he escaped and called me. Said he needed someone to talk to, someone who wouldn't call the cops. By that time I didn't have a crush on him, but I felt sorry for him and agreed to meet him at the Chinese restaurant down by the lake. I always loved that place; little plastic pagodas, fat Buddhas, drinks with paper umbrellas. He showed up late and ordered lobster chop suey. Underneath the table, he slipped me a hit of that purple micro-dot.

I only took half of it because I had a feeling it was going to be a long night. Leaving the restaurant, we held hands, and walked through the deserted downtown. I was also hallucinating which I tried very hard to ignore. Somewhere along the line he had also become a junkie, so he had a plastic bottle filled with methadone. I took a swig of that as we decided to jump in a cab and go to a dance

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club. It was a total shit-hole with twinkle lights, boxing posters and ten different kinds of brandy. Walking in, I saw that the floor was pitted concrete. I got depressed and decided on a shot of tequila because this acid was unpredictable.

Then I looked around for Billy. He was gyrating out on the dance floor, his arms shooting out like rockets. It seemed to make him happy. I sent him a high five and lit a cigarette at the bar. Finally I was starting to feel normal. It didn't occur to me to worry about getting home. In fact it never occurred to me. I started talking to this guy, good-looking and married. But somehow I had completely forgotten I had my period. Because by now I was bleeding all over myself only I didn't know it. And for some reason, I told him I was married, and had two children.

So I was deep into my lies; my husband who worked at the factory, my kids, when it occurred to me to look for Billy, but he was nowhere to be found. I talked cute-married-man into driving me home. And maybe it was the acid or the methadone or the tequila, but we ended up at a motel on the county highway. I honestly don't remember too much about that, and it's just as well because, like I said, I had bled all over myself. He looked pretty freaked out. I shrugged, wiped myself with a few of the flimsy, shitty guest towels, fucked him, and went home.

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Two weeks later, Billy was lying in his coffin, wearing a dark suit. His skin looked like wax. I wanted to ask him how he got home that night. He was so out of it, so high and so sick, he might've sprouted wings and flew. At the funeral, I wondered how many of the other pretty boys in our neighborhood would end up in church, sleeping in a coffin, covered in flowers. A boy walked over to Amy and said, "I was the woman in your brother's life." I was glad to hear that. Nobody should ever have to die alone.

At the cemetery, the priest shook holy water over the open grave and I plucked a white rose for Amy. She asked her mom if we could walk home and she said yes. We took off down Roosevelt Avenue, heading west, away from the lake and the cemetery. I was glad to be out of there. I thought Trudy would want to talk about her brother, but she didn't. I put my arm around her and we kept walking. We smoked a joint, then got a hamburger. At the park, by the swimming pool, she went her way, and I went mine.

