

Unedited Version (the "Before")

"Mike"

My mother, through her work with abused children has shown me the heroism of selfless dedication to a worthy cause. My playwrighting teacher in middle school became an inspiring male role model at a time when I needed one badly. My World History teacher in my freshman year of high school opened my eyes to the connections between our society's culture and our history.

Each one of these people has influenced me profoundly but I feel a certain distance from them: they are my elders. The person who I believe has influenced me most is one of the best friends I ever had, Mike. I feel that wherever I go, I will never be the same for having known him, and I think that is the most profound influence of all.

Mike came to my school in 7th grade. We immediately clicked. His arrival was like an epiphany for me. Not to say that I felt like an outcast, but until he arrived I did not have anyone my age to identify with completely. Mike came and made me feel confident in who I was. We both loved movies, to an obsessive extent, and we had a similar sense of humor. That was all it took.

I would say halfway through that same year we became inseparable. In the yearbook, there was a list of the students in my class and what we were never seen without. Under Mike it said: Ted, and under Ted: Mike. I became a staple at his house and he at mine. It was assumed by both our parents that on weekends there would have to be a sleepover. On weekdays, we usually walked over to his house, which was near school, and hung out there till I had to go home. Our favorite past time on those afternoons after school was to walk to the nearby food mart and get a bag of chips and two 24 oz. Coca-Colas.

It was not all skips through the park. We were extremely competitive. We would get in brutal fights. I know it sounds pretty crazy, but I pulled a chunk of his hair out once. I cannot explain how I could have been so mad at him to do that, except to say that I think our connection was so intense that when we got mad at each other, or at least when I did, we got **really** mad.

Not that it was all *Wrestlemania* either. The intensity of that connection was also a good thing. I was pretty shy about girls, and when I did talk about them with most guys, I would usually just say a girl was "hot". With Mike, I could talk honestly and say what I really felt about a girl.

We dreamed of working together in the movies. Mike wanted to be a director and actor, and I wanted to be an actor and a playwright/screenwriter. It was the perfect combo. We even

tried writing a few scripts together.

Then we went to separate high schools. We tried to maintain the friendship and you would think we would have been able to since we had been so close, but we drifted apart. Now we still go to movies occasionally and hang out, but it's not the same.

I thought Mike and I would be friends forever. Who knows, maybe we still will be. I mean, we have to make those movies together, right? But the way things look right now, I wonder how we would ever re-connect. I think that the first time we became friends was just magic, and the reason are having such a hard time getting that magic back is that it would be like lightning striking twice.

My playwrighting teacher from middle school left, but I handled it, because I learned a great deal from him. I will probably miss my parents when I leave for college, but I doubt the separation will pain me deeply, for I know that the connection between my parents and I will always be there. However, I doubt I will ever get over separating from Mike. Losing that kind of bond cuts deep, and I know it's the type of wound that doesn't heal.

But just because we're not friends anymore, it doesn't slight the times we had when we were friends. Those times are what influenced me so deeply. No, Mike did not work some lesson into my heart, he worked himself in there, and even if I never see the guy again he changed me forever. I think that finding someone who you truly connect with and feel that you were destined to meet, someone who you feel truly understands you and makes you feel special, I think meeting someone like that is one of the most profound experiences you can have.