

Ode to Jamie

DJ Kane

Here comes Jamie, trotting down the street, in his blue signature faded jacket, and blue denim jeans, which he wore all the time,” I bet everyone can remember a Jamie when they were growing up?” He was always that kid to be picked last in sports, and when picked, always in desperation, followed by rejection. He’s the kid who always remained silent; he would always be standing on the sideline, hoping to be picked, finally to be his turn. He could be that over or under weight kid, who always was looking for acceptance, but always being denied.

Sounds like it could have been any of us at one time or another. Jamie was always, to all of us; just Jamie. Jamie seemed always to be taken for granted, guess that was his or our problem to deal with.

Jamie had the best Comic book collection. His collection was awesome, always being a solid to enjoy on rainy days. I guess that was his contribution, to be one of the guys. I’m going back to the early fifties in Brooklyn, when comics were “King”.

We played at the corner of East 21st Street and Avenue X, in a sandlot that was once home to a store, or stores that had been taken down, and removed from it’s foundation, and not replaced. Thus leaving a corner of sand, and uncut bushes, for us kids to play in, and at times becoming the home of appliances reaching their demise.

The sandlot is where I first met Jamie, when I moved into the neighborhood. I was introduced to Jamie, among many of the other kids, and was told Jamie was very slow and quiet, but he had a nice collection of comic books. Not being political correct in those days or any day, the word slow came with a finger to the head bearing a clockwise circular motion. I laughed when told shaking my head in agreement. As kids often do at our age, if we agree or not, being the new kid on the block, and wanting to fit in and make friends. Not saying it was the right thing to do, but we were kids of the 50s.

Jamie and I had become the best of friends. He was the friendliest, and more accessible, of all the kids, and he did have an awesome comic book collection, which I would and enjoy in his home. Besides, I never owed any comics of my own, or money to buy them, and Jamie had much of both, and wiliness to share. He was a good friend to have.

Remember, we were kids of the 50s.

One of our favorite games that we had played in the sandlot, especially at the end of the day was, “Hide and Seek”. In which one covers his or her eyes,(the seeker), whle the other players hide, and the seeker tries to find them. At times, when it would get dark, and close to dinnertime, some of us would hide and others would head for home, and the seeker would have to figure out who was hiding, and who had gone home. Usually it was the same kids returning home for dinner.

I was Friday afternoon, after I had returned from the eye clinic, and decided to go out to play with my friend Butch to the sandlot. As Butch sat in his little red wagon, I pulled him to the sandlot, to see if any of our friends were there. When we arrived, Butch and I joined some friends who had already started playing, hide and seek. I also had become aware of an old refrigerator that had been dumped at the sandlot as trash, with the doors still attached. Some of the kids continued playing hide and seek, while others interests laid in the refrigerator it self, climbing in and out of the refrigerator, and opening and shutting the doors, which sometimes had stuck, and often took more than one kid to pry open.

It was about dinnertime, and we were about to play our last game of, hide and seek. Billy was the seeker, and started counting, as we all started to scramble in different directions. Butch and I started for home, calling it a night. Dinnertime was on our menu.

The next day was a sad somber one for the whole neighborhood. Jamie's Mom and Dad had made a gruesome discovery in the sandlot. They had found Jamie's body locked in the refrigerator. Apparently, the police had surmised, that Jamie had had hid there during the last game of hide and seek, or soon after when everyone left, became locked in, and suffocated. His parents had gone looking for him at the sandlot, after Jamie hadn't arrived at home for dinner and it had gotten dark.

All of our friends had gone to the funeral, at which we were lectured about "Thrown Away Appliances".

In my short life I had never attended a funeral with an open casket, and I didn't like it, and never forgot it. Jamie was in his faded signature jacket, and blue jeans.

Things remained quiet for a while, and the sandlot was cleaned up. Jamie was truly missed. It seemed as if we were waiting for Jamie to start the game. No one wanted to do anything at the sandlot; we just couldn't stop talking about Jamie. He was now the number one topic on the block.

"All I can say, if you can hear me Jamie, that's a hell of a way to make it to the number kid on the block."