

The Breakfast Club

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Jim had a breakfast club, a group of friends who met every Friday at a diner in Chelsea for the last nine years. Many were in attendance at the wake and funeral. It was just last Friday when Jim didn't show up that the group suspected something might be wrong.

A young man from the club spoke at the wake. He was shy at first, talked about coming to New York from Madison, Wisconsin and his great good luck to fall into a breakfast group with one of New York's finest. He told the story of how Jim got one of his nicknames. Apparently a fight was escalating and Jim, afraid of fighting, pulled some kind of psycho routine instead, got the guy's head in a lock and bit off part of his earlobe. Our young man allowed as to how this pre-dated the Mike Tyson incident. And thus Jim was dubbed Starry Night for the painter, the poetry, the ear.

Only later, after the wake, after the funeral, as I was walking up Sixth Avenue, thinking about how much Jim loved to walk the avenues of his city, did it occur to me that he probably appropriated, embellished or made up that story completely. I got back to my office. The clock read 12:12. *A most propitious hour.* Sleep well, Starry Knight.

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