

## One-Liners & Puns

By Lori Cramer

Stacie's shelves are crammed with photo albums, but not one of them contains a picture of Neal. She doesn't have a single shot of him in his Varsity baseball uniform, no photographic evidence of the pink bow-tie she convinced him to wear with his prom tux.

But who needs pictures? Neal's facial features have been burned into Stacie's brain: ocean-blue eyes, freckles splashed across an Irish complexion, toothy smile.

No one could amuse Stacie the way Neal could. He had an endless supply of material—one-liners, puns, knock-knock jokes—and always saved the funniest for her. How would she have survived those disheartening teenage years without him?

After graduation, Neal took off for the city with dreams of becoming a stand-up comedian. For the first few weeks, he called Stacie from a pay phone on Sunday nights and they'd talk and laugh until he ran out of coins. When money got tighter, he sent postcards from comedy clubs. Whether he ever appeared in any of

those places, Stacie never knew. By the time she packed up for college at the end of the summer, the postcards had stopped.

Stacie occupied her time as best she could, first with schoolwork and social activities, then with her work at the hospital, but the specter of Neal remained. Years later, she bought a notebook and filled its pages with as many of his old jokes as she could recall. She reads it every morning with her breakfast, chuckling to herself.

Bio: Lori Cramer writes stories of various lengths, from Twitter fiction to novels. Her short prose has appeared in *Boston Literary Magazine*, *The Drabble*, *Fictive Dream*, *Microfiction Monday Magazine*, *Toasted Cheese Literary Journal*, *Unbroken Journal*, and *Whale Road Review*, among others. Website: <https://loricramerfiction.wordpress.com>. Twitter: @LCramer29.