



David Cassidy

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furtively, tentatively, but relentlessly into the dark, dark world of pills, acid and drugs. Although David wanted to help his buddy so much, there was little he could do.

There was no way for him to stop his friend's trips, and finally that one 'bad trip' too many became a journey of no return for him. On November 19th, they buried his buddy, and the plans, the dreams, the talent so evident all through their years of friendship were buried with the boy whose creative spark could have propelled him across the same stellar skies as David Cassidy!

There are so many words with which to describe his friend—ironically most of them *happy* words.

"I remember in Junior High School—he was really funny—a clown! Always doing really far-out things," David mused, lost in thought. The two boys met when David moved from New Jersey to Hollywood.

"He was really a very *alive* person—you know," David said slowly. "He was a happy, but emotional, boy—and I guess if you add drugs to a guy who is somewhat emotional, it can be disastrous. . . ."

Although David wants no part of the drug scene, he's very aware of it. He doesn't need to read the tabloids to hear about young people who "drop acid", "pop pills" or experiment with the hard drugs that have been responsible for so much heartache. They're everywhere—and David has brushed shoulders more than once with the frightening world of drugs.

"I babysat with a friend on a bad trip once," he admitted. "Man, I don't ever want to do that again! It's like being in an asylum and not knowing what to expect next. A person on a trip's not in control of himself—and he's really not responsible for what he's doing. It's weird. . . ."

A "bad trip?" A "good trip?" Who is to say? Somehow the young people do not fear the results of acid (LSD) as they do hard drugs—perhaps because it is not considered addictive. Yet, unlike the high of other drugs, an acid trip can return to haunt a victim who tries it only once! And it can so undermine self-confidence and assurance that responsibility dissolves under its influence.

■ David knows, as most young people do, the widening spread of the drug culture—the evil sweep of its growing terror. He knows how often it strikes with that awful finality—that it can take those who are most talented, most clearly tagged for future success. He feels the aching reality of its awesome power. He has been forever scarred by its impact: *the drug culture robbed him of his best friend.*

"He had a lot of talents," David said (they'd attended acting school together, after high school). "More so than anyone else I've ever met. He was a writer—a talented writer. You could spot it in him. He was really creative. He used to do things like write skits, for instance. Satire that you can't believe. . . ." Together the two boys worked them into bits—tried, tested, taped them. "I used to have some of them on tape," David told me sadly.

"He also could have been an actor, I

think. He had a lot of ambition—a lot to give as a human being."

Memories came flooding back, happy ones that made the pain of his friend's death even more bitter. "We used to go down to the beach a lot . . . I can remember on a couple of occasions cutting school with him. . . ." David's thoughts dipped back with a reminiscent smile that ended in a sigh of sadness. "Like . . . in the beginning of the summer, when school was out . . . we would go down and go surfing."

They'd been high on *life*, then—on being young—on having fun in the harmless, carefree way that nature intended.

"My buddy was really a warm person, you know. A lot of people liked him. He was pretty popular at school. . . ." Even before they were old enough to date, they'd both known Judy Strangis. The three of them were close—but pretty Judy (of the *Room 222* TV series) remembers David's friend as her "first love." David, she recalls, patched up their quarrels: "David would come on the phone and say something to both of us." He smoothed their ruffled feelings until soon all three were pals again.

The boys shared school-time, leisure-time, even part-time first jobs, Judy told us. On one occasion, at least, the two of them delivered cleaning for her uncle's cleaning shop in Westwood. "They were delivering to all the movie stars and everything, and they were really excited about it," she said.

His friend, David said thoughtfully, "really should have been a writer. He really should have been working at it—going to school." Yet that direction brought its own frustrations.

"Every time he would go to school, he would get caught up in that draft thing." A universally painful problem among young men—but one that aimed his friend even further in the direction of tragedy, created even further disappointments. "He'd say, 'Well, I've got to take X amount of units (to be free of the draft),' so he would take bad classes—or he would just get pushed around. You know . . . he just never ended up in the right thing—in the right niche—for *him*."

"He had a lot of great talents. . . ." David's eyes spoke more clearly than his words in expressing the admiration he had for his friend.

■ But life continued to deal out blows that were far more serious and far-reaching than little lover's quarrels or bad classes for the young man.

"He'd watched his mother for several years, dying of cancer," Judy told us. "You know, living in the same house with someone you know is going to die can just kill a person! His mother died of cancer, and his grandmother took it so bad, that about four days later, *she* died," Judy pointed out. "David really wanted to help him," she added. "David's really a good guy. He wanted him as a roommate—to try to get him *back*," she added. "But I don't think there was anything anyone—any of us—could really do. David would try to talk to him. He'd always say, 'Come on over to the house.' And you know, David leads such a busy life. When he's home, he's either posing for a lay-out—a magazine lay-out—or he's recording. He's always recording! A lot of times, David really tried to take some time out to be with him. . . ."

But there was still another barrier—a shadowy one that neither wanted to admit existed between the two friends, yet one probably both felt. David had found the success his friend only groped for blindly, and while it caused no bitterness, David knew the heartbreak his friend felt for his

own shortcomings. In their dreams, both were to achieve success, not just one.

"When his mother passed away, that brought him really down," David explained. "It left him alone. He was really alone, and he was in a rut. He was a very sensitive person—I've really never met anyone like him. Talented, sensitive, creative people are really far out," he said thoughtfully, as if, here, perhaps, he might find a clue to the tragedy that followed. "He was 'far out.' I don't know if it really had any bearing on the fact that he. . . ." David's voice broke—he couldn't continue that line of thought.

"You know," David resumed, after pulling himself together, "You can't help someone who doesn't want to help himself. . . ." He shook his head as though still trying to make himself believe it.

"Obviously, somewhere inside of him, he wanted to die," David said quietly. "I think he was frustrated in many ways—because he saw *me*—and what I did, you know, I did by myself. It was a matter of getting it together and saying, 'This is what I'm going to do.' I went ahead and did it. He wanted to do it, and I don't think he knew just *how* to put it together. Where to go. Who to turn to. Where to start. I think he was frustrated in many ways."

David's mother, lovely Evelyn Ward, talked to David's buddy. She has young attitudes, is a real pal to David's friends, whether David is around or not. They like to talk with her, straighten out their thinking with her. But maybe for David's friend, it was a painful reminder that he'd lost his own mother.

David didn't give up trying to help his friend. "I would just go and sort of use myself as an example," he said. "You know. 'I'm happy, and I'm not taking drugs! . . . I'm getting more out of life this way.'"

David let himself think out loud: "We were together, at the same level, in high school. We wanted to do things . . . we started there—and he stayed. He became stagnant. I didn't."

"I said to him, 'Hey, you can do it! You ought to utilize what you have,'" David sighed, thoughtfully.

■ Judy understood how hard it was for the two boys to see each other. "He was always comparing himself with David . . . always bringing up how he wasn't doing anything, and how nice it was to see David doing something with himself. He wasn't going to school, and he lived by himself. He was very despondent. I asked him about drugs—but he never would admit it to me. Because he knew I would have gone crazy and been very upset!

"He was really good at acting," Judy continued, "but he never took it seriously enough. He would always say I would like to do this or I would like to do that, but he never really *went* on the interviews, never *got* himself an agent—never did anything to *really* get into it."

The career that both David and his friend aimed for became the wedge that separated them in the end. "I kind of drifted apart from him," David says with a catch in his voice, "as I did from practically every one of my friends. I just didn't see him much the last month or two before he died because I was working all the time. . . ."

"I *talked* to him. . . ." he says. But he "hasn't a clue" as to what might have saved his friend from death. He tried to help him, and he knows that he *did* respond to his encouragement, those times they could be together. "He definitely did," David says. "When we were together, he would go. 'Yeah, I know, I should—but I just don't know where to start.'"

The magnitude of his loss saddens David