

## The Friends in Low Places Podcast

**Thomas:** [00:00:08] What's going on, everyone it's Thomas and Mason. Back again with another episode of the Friends in Low Places podcast.

**Mason:** [00:00:16] I'm Mason. I'm a freshman here at the University of Alabama. I'm currently taking English 101, and for English 101. We're doing this assignment where me and our partner. We have to write a personal narrative essay and then discuss them on a podcast. So that's why we're here.

**Thomas:** [00:00:34] Yup. Yep. And my name is Thomas, as I mentioned before. Also a freshman in the same class, obviously. So little backstory. I'm 18 years old and I'm from Crystal Lake, Illinois, which is about an hour away from Chicago as all Midwesterners have to say.

**Mason:** [00:00:51] I am from Cumming, Georgia, which is a terrible name for a town. I don't know who named it. And it's spelled just about the way you think it's spelled.

**Thomas:** [00:01:01] Yikes.

**Mason:** [00:01:02] Yeah it's, uh, and it's kind of a dump. And I think living in those kind of places. What's important for us was having friends. And that's kind of what our essays are both about.

**Thomas:** [00:01:14] Yeah. Yeah. So before we get into it. How are you doing today, Mason?

**Mason:** [00:01:17] I'm doing good. I got in a fight last night. Yeah, it was. It was a rough morning this morning.

**Thomas:** [00:01:24] Definitely. Definitely. Yeah. No, I'm a big Steelers fan. So, you know, last night was sad for me. You know, took a big L there.

**Mason:** [00:01:31] Yeah. It's one thing to lose to a division rival, but it's another thing to watch your quarterback get clubbed with his own helmet.

**Thomas:** [00:01:38] It was truly, truly just a bad display.

**Mason:** [00:01:41] Yeah, it's a blood sport.

**Thomas:** [00:01:43] All right. So as Mason talked or just referenced earlier, so we're gonna be talking about the dilemmas that kids face while growing up, as well as the importance of those bonds that we create with our childhood friends. Whether it's some

kind of crazy adventure like my story is going to tell or it's just, you know, a little food tradition that you have with your friends. That time you spend with them is so easy to take for granted. And that's what we want to tell you guys about.

**Mason:** [00:02:10] So do you want to start off with your essay?

**Thomas:** [00:02:13] Of course. All right. So as I mentioned earlier, I grew up in Crystal Lake, Illinois, and it's a small town. Probably about like 40000 people. The one problem that we faced a lot growing up was just boredom. Like especially in the summers, there's just not a whole lot to do. And especially when you don't have your driver's license, because once you get that. The only thing you want to do is go out of town. So really, that was like the main problem. But luckily for me, a lot of my friends, we all grew up in the same neighborhood and we all met each other through like our tee ball team or whatever. And I was able to stick with them up until now. And I guess we're still friends, but, you know, we're not all in the same place.

**Mason:** [00:02:55] Yeah.

**Thomas:** [00:02:56] And. Yeah so these friends, mine, Matt, Brandon and Loco, we call him Loco because he was is, was and still is kind of just a crazy guy all around, but we love him all the same. And so we hung out pretty much every day that we could. So we were basically like brothers, which was, you know, it's great. It's great having those friends like that. But so going into middle school. We knew that our friend group would expand a bit. And, you know, as your friend group expands the things that you do, maybe get a little more crazy, maybe a little more stupid with the more ideas that are floating around. So the two people that really brought a little bit of craziness to our group were my great friends, Zach and Falan. Yeah, they just have a knack for finding things to do that maybe aren't the most, you know, safe, maybe not the most smart, but are always gonna be very interesting and very cool. These were my people, you know, basically brothers to me. And so it was now that you know, the context of the situation, let's get into the actual meat of the story, which is it was the summer going into eighth grade and it was, you know, just the typical Crystal Lake summer. We're all bored. You know, basically all we would do is just ride around our bikes trying to find something to do. And one day, Matt invited me over to his house like he did pretty much every day. You know, it's just a normal day. We're hanging out, playing video games. And then suddenly Zach and Falan come sprinting down the stairs and they're like, boys, we have something crazy to tell you guys. Like, guess what it is?

**Mason:** [00:04:39] Any any sentence that starts off with boys something's about to go down.

**Thomas:** [00:04:43] You know, it's gonna be some hooligan activity. So they're like, guess what? And we're like, what dude just tell us? And they're like, all right. So we're riding around, you know, just find some to do. And we came across an abandoned Walmart and we're like, okay, so? And they're like, yeah. So there's a door on the side. We just walked right in. And so we were completely shocked. We're like, what? Why? Why? Why would you do this? But they were like, guys it's the coolest thing ever. You have to see it. There's broken glass. There's like a ton of debris. And just it's so cool. Ton of graffiti. And we're like, oh, okay, fine. All right. And then they just really convinced us to check it out the next day. So the next day came around. We're all hoppin on our bikes. We're like, it's really time to do this or this. That's what I was thinking because I had you know, I've strict parents.

**Thomas:** [00:05:36] You know, I wasn't trying to get in trouble. But then again, curiosity was just too strong.

**Mason:** [00:05:41] I'm in the same boat there. Yeah that was always my thought process.

**Thomas:** [00:05:44] Yeah. I'm like, how could this get me in trouble? That's basically how I thought whenever doing anything. But, you know, as they say, Curiosity killed the cat. But another thing is cats have nine lives. So I was like might as well. So we bike on over. And the whole time I'm just like while we're like getting up to the to the door, I'm looking out on my shoulder like, OK. All right. We gotta look out for people, for cops, for whoever. But luckily, the coast is clear. So we step on in to the abandoned Walmart. And we walked into this like small hallway and there was just like desks and broken glass and just a ton of just garbage just lying around. And it was crazy because was so dark in there. Like the only lights that were coming in were from the boarded up doors up front. Like the natural light was just coming on through. And as I looked as I looked towards my buddy Matt, he always had the best shoes he had. As I look towards the bright blue kicks, I saw this massive blood red pentagram and I was like, okay, this is for real. We got some Satan worshipers in here? Like this is like the chills. I mean, chills.

**Mason:** [00:06:56] Hey, it's a Walmart. It could have been there before it closed.

**Thomas:** [00:06:59] That's true sketchy things are always about at Wal-Mart. But, yeah. So at that point, like, my heart kind of just dropped and I was like, yo, like, there's obviously been some sketchy stuff going on.

**Mason:** [00:07:12] We're about to get eaten by people.

**Thomas:** [00:07:12] Yeah, for sure. Like there could be anyone, anyone could come in here. And I just you know, I as as much as I I love to take in just like the aesthetic and

like everything about it because like it's cool, abandoned buildings, like it's crazy to see something that was like a successful, you know, a store. And then it's now it's just like this crazy like dump of a place with graffiti everywhere and a pentagram is on the ground. So at that point, I decided to convince them, hey, you know, let's get out of here. And, you know, obviously, they're like, no, come on, guys, or stay. It's fine. It's cool. And I'm like, boys, we gotta get out of here. So after, like a few minutes of me convincing them they're like alright fine let's go let's go. So and we hopped on our bikes and I remember actually I know I didn't write this in the story, but after we were leaving, I saw this lady that was coming out of the GameStop across this, not across the street, but like across the strip. It was like a few buildings down. And she had this was, like on her phone, she's looking at us. And I was like, oh, I think she might be calling the cops. So I was like, boys, we got to go. I think that's the fastest I've ever ridden on my bike was getting out of there. So the next day comes around and guess what? We're bored again cause it's Crystal Lake. There is nothing to do. So, you know, we're just we're just hanging out. I think we're like playing basketball or something. And then it was Zach, Matt and Loco because Loco wasn't with us the first day he was like, yo, guys, I want to see this. And Zach and Matt like all right, guys, let's do it. Let's go. Let's go back again. And then the smart ones in the group, me Brandon and Falan were, you know, obviously sketched out. I had saw that lady on her phone probably calling the police. I wasn't about to go back there, it was a one time thing. So us three just hung out at like Wendy's or whatever. And we're like, just, you know, meet us back here on your done or whatever. So they went on, you know, we're waiting there at Wendy's probably for about an hour. So we're starting to get a little worried. And suddenly I actually just get a text from Loco that just says, we're fucked. And I'm like, oh, no. I'm like, what could what could have happened? Because we already saw the blood red pentagram. So there is there was other people there. You know, the lady was calling the cops the other day. So I'm freaking out. I'm like, oh, my God, these are my best friends. Like, what? What is happening to them? We were all so worried. And so I texted back immediately, like, why what happened what's wrong and just no response for like an hour or two. So we wait around at Wendy's for another 30 minutes and we're just thinking, you know, like, oh, my God, what's happened to them? You know, that just that feeling of like. But then you also get a little bit of a feeling of, like I told you so, you know, you're like, y'all are stupid. Like, this is kind of on you,. [00:10:14][181.1]

**Mason:** [00:10:14] Like you're my boys, but you deserve this. [00:10:16][1.7]

**Thomas:** [00:10:16] Yeah, like you messed up. Come on. Everyone knows. Third time around, going into an abandoned building is not going to be good, three days in a row. You shouldn't do, but. Yes. So they told us about how they saw the flashlights come through and the voices of older men and they were just freaking out. And then they found out that luckily for them, it was not Satan worshipers or anything of that nature. It

was just a few policemen who were probably fed up with having to deal with these stupid teenagers. And luckily, the worst thing that they had to do is just call their parents, you know, and just get ratted out by their parents a bit. But yeah. So it was just overall just a crazy experience. But as I look back on it now, I wish I just kind of took that time for granted. I think I did, you know, because I was just too busy, like freaking out the whole time instead of, you know, just even if it was a stupid thing, just enjoying being there with my my friends, you know? Yeah. Yeah.

**Mason:** [00:11:22] So how do you think those lessons you learned about with your friends in middle school translate to your life now in college?

**Thomas:** [00:11:28] Well, it's always and I learned from there. It's always important to know your limits.

**Mason:** [00:11:32] Yeah.

**Thomas:** [00:11:32] So, you know, if you're gonna do something stupid, which obviously you shouldn't, you at at the bare minimum, you should know when to like pull out, you know, when you got to just realize in your head what what what you're doing is just not the brightest. And you should just, you know, skedaddle on out of there.

**Mason:** [00:11:52] Yeah. So do you do you think you're a better or worse person because of the Wal-Mart?

**Thomas:** [00:11:58] Well, obviously, it was stupid, you know, and illegal. But I actually think those experiences made me a better person because it's like you learn from it and then you grow. So it's even even if you do some stupid like even even also like even that I didn't get in trouble. So like I saw my friends get in trouble and that enough is like,.

**Mason:** [00:12:22] Yeah.

**Thomas:** [00:12:22] Like I got to you just you realize like you know, you learn from that I guess. So yeah, I'd say I'm a better person from it.

**Mason:** [00:12:31] Yeah. So going back to you getting away with it, do you think it was a good or bad thing that you didn't get caught?

**Thomas:** [00:12:38] I mean, for my sake, I think it was a good thing just because I don't know what my parents would have done to me. I don't know if I would've been able to hang out with them again. And like, obviously, those friendships were super important to me. So if I if I would've gotten caught, it could have been it could have been the end. The end of that, which would have been. Just not great for me.

**Mason:** [00:13:00] Yeah. Are you still friends with all these guys?

**Thomas:** [00:13:03] Oh, yeah, definitely.

**Mason:** [00:13:04] You all talk a lot still. Yeah, I'm the same way. We've got a big group chat yeah.

**Thomas:** [00:13:10] Yeah. I'm so excited to go home for Thanksgiving. Yeah see my boys again it's gonna be great.

**Mason:** [00:13:14] Inviting everyone over to watch the Crimson Tide will be up on the Tigers in the Iron Bowl.

**Thomas:** [00:13:18] Yes, sir. Yes, sir. Roll Tide all the way.

**Mason:** [00:13:22] Roll Tide. All right. So I guess it's my turn now, huh?

**Thomas:** [00:13:24] Yeah. Let's hear your story.

**Mason:** [00:13:26] All right. So growing up in Cumming, Georgia, there's not a lot to do if you can't drive. No sidewalks in the entire town, so you can't really walk anywhere. And so you're basically stuck at high school all day. And to be honest, that's not fun to do at all. High school is not fun at all.

**Thomas:** [00:13:46] It sucks.

**Mason:** [00:13:47] And so I played football. And that's that's where pretty much all of my friends in high school came from. And what my story is about, in a summarized sense, is us going to a fast food restaurant. And so the context of this is that it's we went to Zaxby's the restaurant most in the fall, which is when school starts. It's when the football season starts. Craziest time of the year. In Cumming Georgia every year. Everyone is everyone is looking at you, talking to you about football all the time and just a whole lot of craziness going on. And so me and my two close friends, Colton and Nick, we didn't really play. This the peak of us going to Zaxby's was our senior year so we could drive there and we didn't really play. So it was kind of an outlet for us to walk into the to a place that had jerseys from our high school hanging up on the walls and a picture of us of Sophomore year of the team photo hanging up right next to one of the registers and just be able to go there and sit in a booth and not have to worry about school, parents, girls, football. And we could just talk and say fuck you to everything that we hated in life. And that was that was what we did. And so there's a lot of symbolism with us going to Zaxby's that I never, ever really realized until after the fact. I drove a white truck. Colton drove a red truck. And then Nick drove a blue Honda Civic. And so when we rolled in, it was always Nick, because Nick had the Civic and he could go the

fastest. And then Colton because Colton's parents paid for his gas and he can go as fast as he wanted. And then me. So it was really like a red, white and blue like definition of American freedom. Just going to eat. Some fried chicken, all American grease.

**Thomas:** [00:15:54] Also classic civic driver

**Mason:** [00:15:56] Yeah, I know. I hate riding in the car with him to this day.

**Thomas:** [00:16:00] It's scary.

**Mason:** [00:16:00] He's my roommate now and it is terrifying. There's nothing scarier than when he's dd'ing because I'm like, I think one of us might be better to drive. I never would. I never would that thought runs through your head when you have a civic driver as a best friend.

**Thomas:** [00:16:18] Of course.

**Mason:** [00:16:19] So, yeah. And my story is written into two sides, basically. So I write about going to Zaxby's everyday after practice and then I write about now in present time. And Colton goes to a different school in south Georgia and me and Nick are here. But me and Nick are always beefin, we're always beefin, it's a struggle. He's back home right now so I've trashed the room because he's a super big, neat freak. And I wake up in the morning and it's like, hey, there's like a crumb on the couch. And it's like, dude, I just woke up and I don't want to deal with this right now.

**Thomas:** [00:17:01] It's a crumb bro relax.

**Mason:** [00:17:05] So we're we're always beefing and it's just the, uh, I don't know. It's I wrote about if our friendship was just a cliché American football freedom story that ended with just our picture on the wall next to the cash register or if it was truly something. And I've I think I've found some answers to that because we all talk a lot in our group chat still like I mentioned before. But I don't know. I'm always beefin with Nick. Doesn't really bother me. It's just like he is just looking at him because he used to have hair all the way down to the middle of his back and that was like his thing.

**Thomas:** [00:17:49] Yeah.

**Mason:** [00:17:49] And always wore a man bun. And it's just like I have two, he cut his hair when we went to college. Now he has short hair like mine. And so for me, I have like it's like I'm looking thinking of two different people when I think of him.

**Thomas:** [00:18:03] Definitely I can see that.

**Mason:** [00:18:04] And just he's a totally different person here and I think he has a lot to do with the anxiety of being in a new place. But so some of our beef is pretty unjustified.

**Thomas:** [00:18:15] Yeah, and kind of a tangent. But like, you know, this that's that kind of thing happens all the time where it's like you have someone you're like best friends with and then you're like, alright, let's room together in college and then it's just.

**Mason:** [00:18:25] Yeah. I would not I would not do that. I would like I love the kid to death, but I I firmly believe it's not healthy for any friendship to room together in college, especially when you live in Patty Hall. That is uh...

**Thomas:** [00:18:40] Traditional uh...

**Mason:** [00:18:42] Storage closet.

**Thomas:** [00:18:42] Yeah. Yeah, the storage closet. Yep. The storage closet. You know, it's tight space, tight quarters.

**Mason:** [00:18:47] You're lucky if you get the janitors style. But mostly it's just. Yeah, it's terrible. We have centralized heating and air conditioning and they send us an e-mail the other day that was like, now that it is winter, there will only be heat. And that was the gist of the e-mail. And we weren't really sure what was going on. And now we have zero air conditioning. And so when you live in a little tiny space, it gets hot.

**Thomas:** [00:19:15] Yeah.

**Mason:** [00:19:15] Really fast. And your air conditioning unit only pumps out hot air.

**Thomas:** [00:19:18] Yeah, that's not fun.

**Mason:** [00:19:20] It's pretty brutal. Yeah. Can't wait till my third semester of college. Yeah. Well I'm out of there.

**Thomas:** [00:19:25] Yeah. Its going to be nice living off campus for sure.

**Mason:** [00:19:27] Reelin it back in a little bit. I ended my essay with a lot of wishes. Saying that I wish I would have appreciated how much these meals meant with my friends. I wish I would have cried when I hugged Colton before I drove off to college. And I wish I would have talked to Nick a little bit about our situation, our room before it became so unfixable. But at the end of the day, it's just a wish. You can't, you can't change some things. So that's kind of the gist of my essay is talking about how important friends are. You should really never take them for granted.

**Thomas:** [00:20:06] Yeah, and definitely as I was reading, because we had to exchange our stories. So, you know, and we know what was happening between, you know, for the podcast. But I remember when I was reading when I was reading your story, I was getting in my feelings, man. I was like damn.

**Mason:** [00:20:21] Well, actually, I actually wrote this on a bench out by Denny Chimes because my roommate pissed me off so much that I just had to leave. Otherwise, some, like, we were gonna, like, throw hands. It was it was bad. And so I just went out there and sat there and I was like I was like, it's like he just doesn't understand. I just put my feelings on paper.

**Thomas:** [00:20:43] So, yeah, I could definitely

**Mason:** [00:20:44] It's pretty heavy essay.

**Thomas:** [00:20:45] Yeah, I could definitely relate to that cause. You know, obviously growing up I had a very tight group of friends as well. So it was like that that feeling of like, you know, I should I should have cried when I hugged him when he was like like I cried like a baby. So I was like I felt that. And it was. It was just it had me reminiscing about all the stupid things, like abandoned Walmart and just, you know.

**Mason:** [00:21:08] Yeah. And that line. Me and Colton are both pretty like tough guys. Yeah. Attitude.

**Thomas:** [00:21:13] You know Football players.

**Mason:** [00:21:15] So like I think we both had that same sense, same reminiscent of when I like hugged him before I drove off to college. And when I was thinking about that I was like, you know, like it it doesn't matter. Like sometimes you just gotta set aside your pride and just show your emotions.

**Thomas:** [00:21:34] Sad things are sad, man.

**Mason:** [00:21:36] Yeah.

**Thomas:** [00:21:36] But another thing that made me think about like my own experiences was like I had we had our own, you know, chicken eating related tradition.

**Mason:** [00:21:48] Yeah.

**Thomas:** [00:21:48] Every Friday for lunch, we would go to Chick fil A called it Chick Fil A Fridays. And now every Friday, I just think about it. And it's it's like, damn, I miss that.

**Mason:** [00:21:59] Yeah.

**Thomas:** [00:22:00] And it's crazy because it's like that's just like the smallest thing, you know.

**Mason:** [00:22:03] And even even the food, like if you go eat the food, you're just instantly back in that booth with your friends.

**Thomas:** [00:22:06] Exactly. Every time I eat Chick Fil A now I just think about it. And it's crazy how that works. Yeah. So after all the time that is passed, do you think it would, you know, be just like old times if you all got together and shared another meal at Zaxby's?

**Mason:** [00:22:19] I do. It'd be different. We definitely have a lot more to talk about. Yeah. We wouldn't have to just sit there in silence for a couple of minutes. We'd all have a lot of stories to tell.

**Thomas:** [00:22:29] That's true.

**Mason:** [00:22:31] It was weird. Me and Nick went back one weekend to watch a football game in our hometown and me and him were totally fine. Didn't argue at all. But then the moment we got back here and we were living in the same room, it was back to its thing, which I do hope. I do hope that we can go back to Zaxby's with everyone and just be like we used to be. That'd be really good.

**Thomas:** [00:22:54] Yeah, I can definitely relate to that because I literally just past like over the weekend. I went to Colorado to visit some of my friends that moved out there for college. And it was it was just like old times. It was like nothing had happened and it's like we just haven't seen each other for like a week. That's what it felt like. So I guess that just goes to show how how strong our bond was.

**Mason:** [00:23:14] Yeah, absolutely. All right. And so, as you can tell from our experiences, the time you spend with your friend group growing up shapes you into the person you are. And it's very easy to take that time for granted without even knowing it. While we spend so much time invested in the present, times change regardless, and we may not be able to get to see the people we love every day. So it's important to continue and cherish those good memories and keep people keep up with people in those memories. So I think that that goes for any walk of life. It doesn't just have to be friends. It can be family, or any any any person that you have good memories with. You should keep in touch with.

**Thomas:** [00:23:54] That's true. And now they y'all have heard our stories. Just go out and tell your friends how much you appreciate them. Send them a snapchat, send them a text, call them up. Just tell them you love them because, you know, it's it's crazy

because as soon as you go off to college, you you just have to make all new friends, you know, everything's different. So then you just, you spend a lot of time just thinking about your year old buddies. So just, you know, you got to cherish the time that you spend with them now. You know, while you have it, because it can be gone in the blink of an eye.

**Mason:** [00:24:26] It's almost like going to college and is like being on a diet.

**Thomas:** [00:24:31] Yeah.

**Mason:** [00:24:31] Because you you're working really hard to better yourself. And so you go out and eat all this good food and it may not taste the best, but, you know, it's better for you.

**Thomas:** [00:24:41] Definitely.

**Mason:** [00:24:41] And eventually you can probably get a really good rhythm of eating that food and being OK with it. But then you go back to that burger.

**Thomas:** [00:24:48] And you're always going to miss that burger.

**Mason:** [00:24:50] Yeah. You just love that burger.

**Thomas:** [00:24:52] And you've got to cherish that burger.

**Mason:** [00:24:54] You got to enjoy that. Yeah, absolutely.

**Thomas:** [00:24:56] It's worth it for sure.

**Mason:** [00:24:57] Because you got to go back to the diet because that's just life.

**Thomas:** [00:24:59] Yeah.

**Mason:** [00:24:59] Gotta do what's good for you.

**Thomas:** [00:25:00] That's how it works.

**Mason:** [00:25:01] Sometimes you got to enjoy the burger.

**Thomas:** [00:25:03] Definitely. So don't forget as your time changes, so does, so do your circumstances. So especially if you're like us and you're going through a lot of changes with your friends like college, maybe a break up or some kind of beef, just, you know, you've got to keep up with them and, you know, work through it because those friends are your friends.

**Mason:** [00:25:23] Yeah. Like I said before, set aside your pride sometimes.

**Thomas:** [00:25:26] Exactly it's what you gotta do.

**Mason:** [00:25:26] show your emotions.

**Thomas:** [00:25:29] All right. So time to wrap up our one and only episode of The Low, The friends in Low Places Podcast.

**Mason:** [00:25:36] Our one hit wonder podcast.

**Thomas:** [00:25:37] For sure.

**Mason:** [00:25:38] All right.

**Thomas:** [00:25:39] Streamed millions of times.

**Mason:** [00:25:40] Thank you, guys for listening. Roll Tide

**Thomas:** [00:25:41] Roll Tide.