

## F IS FOR FLORIDA

During my first week in South Korea I attended a mandated First Terms Airman's Course (FTAC). The PowerPoint filled snooze fest would have been a waste of a week if it weren't for Stu. During our first-day's introductions we were asked to stand up and share a few things about ourselves. I stated my hometown, name and something I was good at. Young and insecure I remember being slightly embarrassed, but I said art. This was when I thought art was for girls, but that's another story.

Stu approached me during a break and mentioned he liked art too and recommended I check out this tattoo shop with him on the weekend. We jumped on a greyhound-type bus and took the hour trek north into Seoul. Long story short, I met a Korean-American named Aerok who ran the shop. He liked my drawings and said if I came up on the weekends he'd have his crew teach me how to tattoo. After a few months of apprenticing I was ready to try my skills on real skin. But who would let an 18-year-old amateur artist practice stabbing them with a tattoo needle? Stu, Stu would.

He waited patiently for the day when I would be ready to start laying ink. Nervous and only slightly sure of what I was doing, we finally set up a day to do my first tattoo. We sat around for the better half of the evening trying to decide what I should tattoo. I asked him what he wanted and he said, "Whatever." Like the two brilliant 18-year-olds we were, we decided to tattoo the letter F on his leg, F for Florida. Stu was from Florida. A few hours passed by and the tattoo was complete. That F was as bad as Florida's humidity.

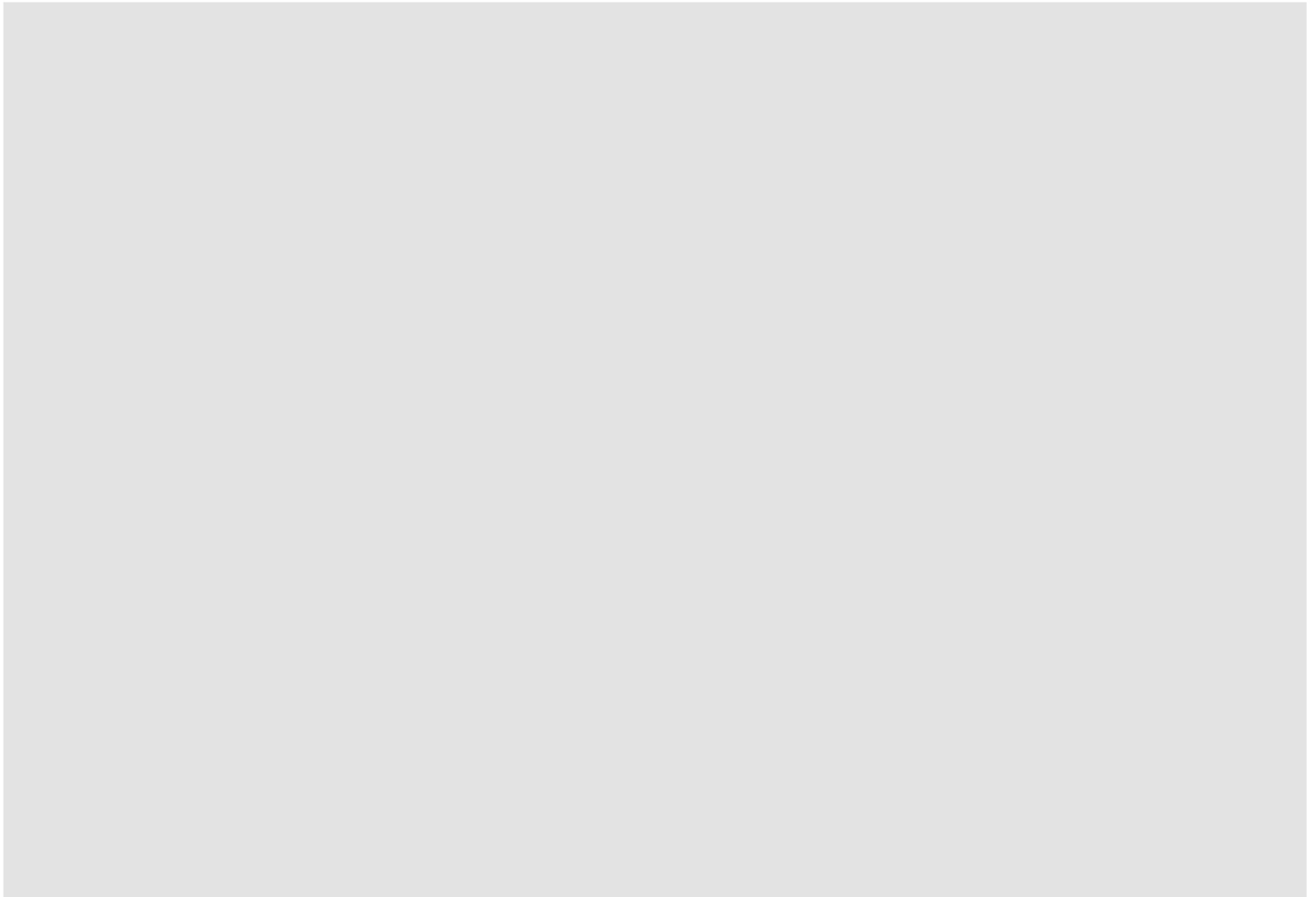
Going into this, Stu knew this wasn't going to be pretty work and that's why this story is special to me. Stu's exact words were, "I don't care how bad this thing is, I just want to have your first tattoo". This is an extreme example of believing in a friend. Stu was so confident in my art career before it even started that he was willing to rock a lousy tattoo for the rest of his life. I believe it's crucial to have friends in your circle willing to radically invest in your dreams.



## REFLECTION

1. Do you have a Stu in your life? It could be family, a friend, a supervisor or even literally an investor. If you answered yes, keep those friends close. If not, focus on quality over quantity in relationships.
2. It doesn't have to be as permanent as a tattoo, but are you believing in your friends? Are you someone's Stu?
3. The right relationships are important, if a tight-knit circle radically invests in and lifts each other up, as a collective they'll grow exponentially. Do you trust your friends have your best interests in mind, and vice versa?

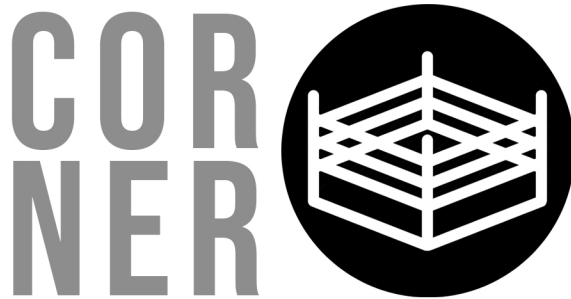
## NOTES



## SHARE

This series was inspired by the ring. Like a fighter, we depend on the people in our corner. We can only fight for so long before we need rest, healing and feedback. This series was simply written to help you fight the good fight. Whether you're lacing combat boots, sneakers or oxfords, let's favor a plan to crush the trials ahead. If you've felt empowered or inspired through these short stories, like iron sharpens iron, I encourage you to share this with your team.

Thank you for subscribing to my newsletter. I appreciate you sticking around for my storytelling. If you envision ways for me to improve, your feedback would be much appreciated. Please keep in touch, reach out or send a shoebox of money.



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