

THE BELLARMINE REVIEW

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MISSION STATEMENT

We desire to publish poetry and prose that is clear, concise, and evokes the senses, taking the reader to the writers imagined placed through strong writing and a good sense of rhythm. It is believed in Jesuit education that an academic endeavor may be an encounter with the divine, and we strive to live by the motto *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*. That is to say that in the authenticity of our written thoughts we may unknowingly stumble on truth. Our intent is to give our students' words a place to land, serving as a venue to acknowledge their living truth.

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All students are welcome to e-mail submissions of poetry and prose to Mr. Chesbro jchesbro@fairfieldprep.edu by March 1. Join us for the Creative Writing club, Thursdays, after school, in B203.

ESSAYS



Cliff Jumping

Liam Woods '19

When I was younger, my parents would always take me to a small beach town where my grandparents lived, Niantic. While there, I spent my days going sailing. We would go out, and I would lay on the deck with my shirt off and feel the salty breeze go over my skin, cooling the relentlessness of the summer sun. I spent a good amount of my summer out there every year back then, but it was also significant in that it was also the place where I learned for the first time to face something of which I was really, truly, frightened. This is where, for the first time, a major conflict between the “essential connection”, so described by St. Augustine, of my heart and my mind, where my heart was telling me to act but my mind was yelling at me to stop.

One time when we went up to Niantic, it was a particularly beautiful day, the glassy water and calm winds not giving any push to the sailboat. So, one of my parents' friends decided he would take us around the other side of the bay to go cliff jumping. Considering the wind, the journey was especially long, which resulted in a 5 year old me wildly racing inside my mind about what exactly cliff jumping meant. They couldn't actually mean that we'd be jumping off of a cliff, did they? How high would it be? Twenty feet? Thirty? *Fifty*? I remember my mother asking me what was wrong, and I told her that I was scared to jump. She consoled me, saying that it wasn't that scary and that it would be fun. Yeah, right. That didn't help. She was an adult, and adults weren't scared of anything.

We finally rounded the far side of the bay, which couldn't have been more than a mile and a half, but going in a boat at around walking speed, coupled with my dread, made the journey much, much longer. We continued down the other side of the bay and I finally saw the fated cliffs. The drop couldn't be more than the height of a classroom, as I now know, considering I've been back many times since, but to a terrified 5 year old, those 10 feet might as well have been 10 miles.

“How are we getting up there?” I asked my father. He looked at me puzzled, and said, “Well, we have to climb, of course.” That did it. There was no way I was going to do this. My father jumped into the water and shouted back at me to come with them. My sister was already ahead of me. How embarrassing! I'm being such a scaredy-cat, that even a girl isn't as scared as I am!

I stepped over the rope and lept into the water, frantically trying to catch up to my dad, in case there was some shark or something in the 10-foot deep water that would come from underneath me and try to eat me. As we approached the cliff, I saw my dad's friend getting a foot on something and climbing up the less steep part of the rock formation. I put my foot in around the same place, and felt a bunch of slimy seaweed against my foot. Ugh. When was this going to be over? I cautiously made my way up, careful not to slip and fall back down. The others were all at this one little part of the formation that extended itself somewhat from the others. I could see my mom waving to me from the boat. How would she know it wasn't scary? She wasn't even with us!

I looked over the side of the cliff and down into the greenish-blue water. I took

a step back, not wanting to fall off from the sudden sense of dizziness that had come on. My dad went first, running and leaping as far out as he could. My sister went, jumping out to the applause of both my mother and father. It was then my turn. I hesitated, trying to tell myself to just do it, that it was like a diving board, but the thoughts kept coming, “What if you slip? What if you crack your head open? What if you...” and so on. This was the day where I began to learn to ignore any sense of “I can’t do this” that my brain would yell at me, and instead to face my nervousness and rise above it. “Come on, Liam!” I heard my dad shout. I looked down at him floating comfortably in the water. I took a deep breath, walked to the edge of the cliff, and jumped.

Lessons of Innovation

Jack Carroll '19

I met my new supervisor, Lang, a former naval officer who had commanded a nuclear-powered battleship, at the door of the plant. My hand trembled as I shook his hand, my nerves only being exacerbated by the chaos presented in front of me. Forklifts and tanker trucks whizzed back and forth, hard-hatted operators shouted instructions across buildings, and the air hummed with the power of massive industrial equipment. Near the edge of the facility was an outdoor warehouse, inside of which were hundreds of blue drums of chemicals, individually labeled. The giant brick buildings were centered around enormous white silos with poison and hazmat symbols printed on them, branching off into a labyrinth of pipes overhead.

Lang led me to a smaller gray building. A sign read “Safety Center” over a heavy steel door. We entered into an eerie silence as the door closed. As we walked to the conference room, where training would take place, Lang explained the lack of hazmat waste disposal when the company was founded. “Right under our feet, in fact, is a whole lot of radon and strontium, just sitting there. We’re figuring out a way to get rid of it safely.” Interesting, I thought, nodding.

“Safety training. You two have already met,” my supervisor pointed to a helmeted duo. PowerPoint Slide 1: Accidents. He pulled out a document listing the incidents that had taken place over the month. There had been a lost beachgoer who had wandered onto the grounds and near the hazmat dumping site. There had been spills of twenty-gallon barrels of heptane (“very flammable”). And a list of one-liter spills of naphthalene, heptane, and sulfonates so long that it ran on for pages. I gripped my pen tighter.

“Oh, and always keep your phone in your desk in a metal container or in your car. They can cause a spark, so don’t forget.” He explained that something as simple as a phone ringing—an electronic signal—could cause a major catastrophe if the circumstances were right. I hadn’t been there more than a few days when one of the foremen mismanaged the flow in the pipes and a valve broke, creating a bizarrely beautiful geyser of flammable vapor spewing into the sky, a mist of it spreading out and twinkling like a prism. I watched in terrified awe as the hazardous cloud slowly drifted down onto the roof, embossing it with a shimmer.

I felt apprehensive and chronically tense, thinking that something would break if I looked at it the wrong way. My fear soon gave in to curiosity and wonder.

I never had imagined how complex and dangerous the everyday work in the industry actually was until working at the plant. I frankly had imagined it was mostly working behind a desk, typing away on my keyboard. I learned, though, that making new materials-like coatings for ballistic glass that deflect bullets, or for ships to prevent the steel from rusting, or for medical equipment to stave off bacteria-involve a lot of risk, but their results spur the world forward with each small step.

Learning about the responsibilities of an engineer was overwhelming, and I felt out of my depth at just about every point. I learned something important about myself in the process however. Engineering, or solving tangible problems and seeing their solutions, is something that motivates me to do things I would normally not be able to accomplish. The idea of advancing technology and making people's lives easier allows me to feel like part of a cause greater than my own gain.

The mundanity and minutia of my experience never failed to challenge me, though. Every time a new patent research assignment got dropped on my desk, a sense of dread set in. "Oh God, not another 3 hours on the computer," I thought, afraid to open the assignment to confirm my suspicions. Each time this happened, I looked out the window onto the plant, gazing through the massive equipment and pipes, and across the river into the smokestacks and brick buildings. I was reminded what the cost was to innovate, and change the world. I would then open the folder, and type away.

Of Woods and Open Fields

Nash Lovallo '19

My cousins and I are cramped into my family room on a below-freezing December day, bored to tears because we are sick of watching television and playing Xbox. I look outside the window facing the backyard and woods and think, "There must be something we can do on this damp winter day; something that doesn't involve technology." There is a pond in the woods behind my house that may be frozen. "We could probably skate on a pond that's back in the woods," I suggest to them. They agree. We grab three pairs of skates from my garage. "We don't need our phones," I suggest and they agree. Our adventure to the pond begins.

We're dodging branches, pricker bushes, and fallen trees. As I trek through the woods I am overwhelmed by a feeling of nostalgia. I feel like a little kid again, going on an adventure, free from responsibility. There's no stressing about homework, no tennis practice, no filming for media club, all I have is a pair of hockey skates and a hockey stick, along with a few pucks. We near the opening in the woods, and I can start to make out the pond. At this point my sweatpants are completely soaked from our excursion through the snow, but who cares.

As we get to the pond it is evident that it is only partially frozen; not skatable. Next to it, I notice a dirt path just wide enough for one single car, leading to an open abyss. I curiously wander toward the dirt path, my cousins following. Along the way we encounter large fields surrounded by wooden fences. It appears to be a horse farm, minus the horses. After a while it becomes evident we stumbled upon an abandoned farm where horses and cows would once graze in the fields. I am amazed at how I never had any idea of this fascinating landscape that is so close to my house, yet seems so distant. As I walk down this path, I feel disengaged from my chaotic life, the life I live less than a mile from this spot.

Woods surround these open fields, with a large crimson red barn at the far side of the field. The vastness of grey-brown trees clustered in the woods, contrasted by the open yellow grass field, covered with a thin layer of snow, made me feel grounded and centered from the pandemonium that I encounter everyday. I feel a sense of independence as I walk through this field, untouched by the pressures of the real world. I wander into the barn and find a carpet of grass. The barn is empty, except for a large American flag hanging on the opposite wall. This Star Spangled Banner is the only sign of life left on this farm. I am not sure if it is 2015 or 1935. This flag that symbolizes freedom for American citizens reminds me of the freedom that I was feeling at this very moment. This image has stayed with me, even though I was not able to capture it on my phone.

My day-to-day life is structured; it consists of school, tennis practice, and homework, among other responsibilities. Within that world, there is another world of social media and the internet which compels my generation's attention. But this day was different. I was overwhelmed by a feeling of pureness, of being untouched by modern society with its technology and obligations.

After another hour or so of exploring, darkness approached. As the sun dropped in the skyline, so did our spirits. We would have to return soon, back to a life of responsibility. I had never admired the natural world so much before that moment. I had never been at peace like that before, walking around a field, with my two cousins, trying to find something to do on an empty December day.

Whistle and Go Fishing in Heaven

Jack Kane '19

From an early age nature has been a place of personal reflection for me. So, when I saw a fishing rod lying between the mousetraps and catchers masks in my shed one morning, I dreamt of the adventures I would have with monsters on the end of my line. Thinking on goliath groupers and other beasts of the sea, I spent that spring morning when I was nine fiddling with the spool of line until it flowed like a strong current. I became captivated by the way it spun, like a watch face wound with line. As the hands of time have passed, my lines have been cast off docks, sliding rocks along creek beds, and just about everywhere in between.

I go fishing a few times a month as long as the lakes have not been frozen over. For the most part I go alone, since I am trying to clear my thoughts and relax. Throughout the 9 warm months of the year, I travel to lakes and ponds across New England. This summer, I was able to fish in Vermont. I was in the state for my biggest junior golf tournament of the year, and the night before my 8 am tee-time, went fishing to clear my thoughts. The goal of that night was to keep myself grounded and in a good frame of mind, not to mention catch a fish. I fished until I couldn't see my hand that night, and rested easy after catching 2 small bass. The next day, I was free of the jitters that usually accompany playing at a high level and was able to fire a strong 76 in difficult conditions. I have played competitive golf most of my life, but fishing has always captivated my whole being.

Part of the ambience of fishing are the sounds. Even words associated with fishing have a special sort of cadence. I relish this as I grab the box full of crankbaits, hard-baits, jigs, spinnerbaits, and depending on the location, occasionally frozen squid (which at my mother's detest has been lying around the fridge the last few weeks). Each piece of bait is accompanied by line of varying weight, hooks of bent steel, and swivels. Once the preparation is complete, the rod launches the potent combination of bait, line, and hook into the abyss. The line sinks with a plunk and I will wait for the patter of a fish out of the water.

While listening for a splash, I will often start my playlist of simple songs, songs that allow me to appreciate both setting and sound. Occasionally, a hard biting riff and a throttled drum piece might change the dynamic, but rarely. The notes will settle in along the water, and climb up to the peaks of the pines. When the line churns, the rod spits and tugs creating a harmony that will make me want to, "whistle and go fishing in heaven", like the John Prine song. But, with each cast the whine of the reel will become increasingly obnoxious when an empty hook is on the end of the line. Most of the time I will grow weary and lose my anxiety with the line in the water. My head may even slump to the rock against my back. Somehow, a tug will rattle through the cork of the rod. Out of desperation, I will yank at the fish, and it will be gone faster than it came. Sometime later, redemption may reverberate through the rod. Hopefully, I will accept the force of the bass, and grant the freedom necessary to reel it in. If this is accomplished, I will rip up on the line setting the hook, and begin the fish's advance to the shore.

The first time the shiny body breaches the water, I will be overcome with joy as it always seems to look larger from this vantage. For a while, a constant stopping and starting on the reel occurs, by then the fish is devoid of energy. Once this happens the fight is over. I will grasp it with my thumb pressed up inside its mouth as it wriggles for freedom. Eight years ago, when I found

this rod, I would imagine hoisting what can only be described as a hippo of the sea. This will not be one of them. Nevertheless, my struggles for the little bass, and all the other fish I have caught, have taught me more about myself than fishing. With all the empty hooks and sounds of the woods, I have found the place that puts harmony into my life.

SHORT STORIES



A Hero's Struggle

David Smeriglio '19

As Private Stillson sits up early in the morning, the sun illuminates the room. The light catches the closet in the corner and shows a piece of the arm of his uniform. It hangs proudly in his closet next to his civilian clothes, which his mother dropped off while visiting the week prior. Each morning, the cement floor captures the cold and shoots it upward toward Stillson as he flinches and rolls back over. However, this morning he stood his ground, now with a different enemy. He rose up this morning and looked at the clock high up on the wall which read 6:54. This was the earliest he has ever risen since his right arm was stolen from his body. The part he hated the most was seeing his "Semper Fi" tattoo, which now showed as "er Fi." The room lacked much color besides his uniform and brown boots beside his bed.

There were no other patients, and there were few doctors around to check in on Stillson. Not many people were present to make sure that he would survive. Stillson quickly walked over to his uniform in the closet and put it on his bed. Today was the big day. He was finally going to receive his Bronze Star and he needed to appear in full uniform for the ceremony. There was a grainy old TV in the corner which Stillson turned on in order to have some form of company in the morning. It took a couple of minutes before the black and white images of the news came through. Hearing the voice of the newscaster was calming. "Yesterday, thirty-two young men were brutally killed in Hanoi fighting for the freedom of this great nation," says the newscaster. Stillson wonders if he knew anyone who was killed, but that is something that he can't be worrying about just yet.

The water in the shower was cold because it always took some time to really warm up, and Stillson knew he didn't have much time. He overslept a bit and needed to hurry, especially because he had no idea how long it would take to get dressed. He looked at himself in the mirror. He looked as skinny as a rail and, for the first time since he became a marine, that didn't matter. He still didn't like the way he looked in the mirror though, with his ribs showing from his stomach, his one good arm looking more like a twig than that of a combat veteran, and his legs no longer seeming like those of a man, but a boy. Shaving was not nearly as difficult. It took little effort, which always made Stillson smile just a little bit.

The black uniform was laid out on his bed sheets and seemed totally out of place in the room. Stillson wondered where he would start, and more importantly, how he would start. The marines trained him for everything in his life. He learned how to kill, how to obey orders, how to disarm an enemy, how to be accountable, yet he never learned how to put on his uniform with one arm. There were no drills in basic training meant for after the war, yet he was trained about how to deal with a loud 12 year old boy on top of a mountain in Iraq, which he never encountered. He wondered if he could call himself a marine anymore since he could not even dress himself in the morning. He would always have the memories to show for it, but his tattoo begged to differ.

The gold buttons on his black and red lined jacket were daunting, and they stood out against the white of the hospital room. Stillson imagined that the jacket arm would look pretty silly with an empty flap, but there was nothing that could be done at the moment. The more important matter was trying to put on the jacket, and while he worried about the buttons, just putting his

one arm in the sleeve was challenging enough. Every time he got close, the jacket would slip, resulting in him trying to reach with his stump of an arm to catch it. It proved useless and the jacket would inevitably fall to the ground. He was a marine, and marines continue to fight; or so he was told. His fighting days with guns were over, yet the biggest battle of his life was with the jacket. He tried again and again to put the jacket on. Finally, he slipped in his stump first and quickly followed it with his good arm. He took a sigh of relief and thought that it might be possible for him to exist alone in the world. After all, one rarely ever needs a jacket in Florida.

The next step was buttoning the jacket. There were six large gold buttons on the front of his jacket going all the way down to his belly button. Stillson, at first, tried to bite down on the coat as he pushed the button through the hole with his hand, but he bit down too far from the hole. The button failed to go through. Stillson knew that he would look pretty dumb to someone else if they were watching, which is why he was glad none of the nurses had seen him just yet. He took it off and became a bit discouraged for he had worked so hard at getting it on. He tried to button the jacket before he put it on so he could just slip it over, but even that did not work. Just as he thought about giving up, a young nurse walked in who didn't seem to notice Stillson struggling on his bed. He would not have accepted an offer for help, and he sure as hell wasn't going to ask her for it. He knew what he signed up for three years prior, and he wasn't going to compromise.

Stillson pushed one side of the jacket under his stump and pressed it firmly against his body, allowing an opening for the button to enter. Stillson knew he had to button the bottom ones first in order to slip the jacket over. He would deal with the top button afterwards. Slowly but surely, Stillson buttoned all of the buttons so he could slip the jacket on like a pullover. Now he had to figure out how to button the remaining loop. He decided to push the flap over with his stump just enough so that he could quickly push the button through right under his chin. He did all of this without looking down, and after about 7 or 8 tries, he finally succeeded in buttoning the final one. The fact that his jacket took so long to put on made Stillson worry about the shoes that sat by his night stand.

The navy blue pants with a red line on the sides were not nearly as hard to pull on, which prompted another sigh of relief. He looked back on his bed at the white marine hat that he remembered wearing so proudly when he graduated from basic training. With a smile, he flopped the hat on nonchalantly. Stillson slowly strided over to the mirror in the bathroom, threw on the light, and looked at himself proudly. He looked at the buttons which took so long to put on and smiled; he looked at the marine logo on his white hat and smiled; he looked at the blue pants and smiled; he looked at the empty flap, and frowned. Then Stillson looked down at his feet and realized he needed to put on the finishing touches: his shoes.

Stillson's black shoes that sat by the nightstand by the bed were a daunting task for him now that he thought about his situation. He knew that it wasn't going to be that hard to slip his feet in, but he had no idea how he was going to tie them. It had already taken him nearly a half hour to get ready, and now he was stuck with about 10 minutes before he had to leave. He slipped his right foot into the opening and quickly followed it with his left. If the marines didn't

show him how to put on his jacket, they definitely didn't show him how to tie his shoes. He looked down at the two long laces and tried to think back to when he was a kid listening to that saying his mom had about the bunnies. It didn't matter because they had two ears and he had one arm. He made a loop in one hand and quickly let go as he realized he couldn't make the other loop. He looked at the clock on the wall; he had 6 minutes before he was getting picked up. He looked back down at his shoes and began to feel his heart beat pick up a little. He folded one string over the other but he couldn't pull the shoe lace tight. He cursed out his own shoes right before hearing a knock at the door. The same young nurse stood on the other side, "Private Stillson? I completely forgot about your ceremony today. Are you ready?" Only silence followed until the nurse continued, "Private Stillson?"

A Matter of Business

John O'Connor '19

Two men gather on a cold morning in January to discuss business matters in a local diner. The two men are co-founders of a self-built company; a small but locally known group that offers interior design along with actual laborious renovation. It is quite strange to see the two spending almost the entirety of their adult lives together, especially when considering their frequently conflicting thought processes and interests. Nevertheless, they gather at the diner almost every week, and this winter morning was no exception to that routine. Both of the men are familiar to most people around the town.

Alvis, most often called Alvie, is the one in charge of the big picture stuff for the company. He spends his time focusing on the creativity that is crucial for the designs and architecture. Griffin relies more heavily on blunt force and power tools than thought, and being the head contractor, he controls all of the renovation. Each of them appears to know that the other is equally important to the company, but deep down they both hold a subtle arrogance that gives them a false sense of authority over the other. Besides this, it has always been a relatively harmless relationship.

Alvie orders his two eggs over-easy with a slight change in the side order depending on the day. Today he chooses a small stack of Canadian bacon. Griffin tries something new on the menu every time, and it usually causes a bit of excitement in Alvie's day. Today, like all days, Griffin initiates the conversation while allowing his internal arrogance to surface. He always holds a subtle smile on his face that would only fade if he lost interest. He begins with his weekly question.

"So what ideas have you thought of this time, Alvie?"

"None worth talking about." responds Alvie, noticing Griffin's condescending attitude.

This is something out of the ordinary. The grin on Griffin's face fades as he clenches his fist under the table. Alvie has always been notorious for announcing far-fetched ideas that Griffin tries his hardest to shut down. Griffin loves the weekly argument, even though he is always bested by Alvie's superior mind. Griffin sits through each fight taking pleasure in the thought that he could win much more easily if fists were involved. But at this moment, he only notices Alvie's locked gaze that replaced his usual curious wandering eyes. Alvie could find entertainment with anyone or anything around him without any experience. The eyes of Griffin were always set on one thing at a time, yet his glance somehow always managed to navigate every woman in the room. This time is different. Both men stare at each other in cooperation.

"Did you hear about your guy's new interest?" asks Alvie.

"What guy are you talking about?" asks Griffin in response

"The one who's been working for us since the beginning. I can never remember his name."

"Oh, him. Yeah, I heard." Griffin says as his eyes begin to narrow.

The men discuss rumors around their company about one of their oldest workers. According to some of them, this older man has expressed interest in both sides of the company. He has worked as a contractor since he started at the company years ago, but he is not interested in leaving it all behind. He wants to share his ideas for design that he has held back for years while still contributing to the work that makes the designs a reality. Alvie and Griffin struggle to fully understand the situation, but each of them tries to hide an internal rage. The idea of combining both sides together fostered a shared hatred between the two of them. Alvie's left hand begins to tremble as rapidly as a frightened dog. He cannot help it. The people around the diner begin to glance over at their table, as if some sixth sense was triggering them.

"So what do you think about it?" asks Alvie with a genuinely curious tone.

Griffin was never the best at putting his thoughts into words, especially when he is put on the spot. His eyebrows raise out of his surprise at the question.

"No good," answers Griffin as confidently as he can, hoping his simple response was enough.

"My thoughts exactly," replies Alvie.

Together, they examine ways to shut the problem down. Things must stay the way they have always been. Alvie comes up with several ideas and Griffin seems to be following along. As Alvie lets his thoughts spill into words, Griffin interrupts with a new grin forming on his face.

"Why don't we just make him leave?"

Alvie begins to feel uncomfortable at the suggestion. His hand is shaking even faster than before. He knows that Griffin's qualities are taking over the situation. Making sure to keep his hand as steady as possible, Alvie digs into his eggs and lifts his fork to his mouth in hopes of seeming calm.

"There are better ways to settle this, don't you think?" asks Alvie. "After all, the guy has been working with us for so long."

Griffin stares at Alvie in silence, understanding that a response to his comment is not necessary.

Alvie notices the increasing interest of the people sitting around them. He begins to wonder what these people find so interesting. They haven't raised their voices. While his mind processes, Griffin catches a glimpse of Alvie's left hand, noticing his twitch for the first time in years. Griffin celebrates with a bite of the food on his plate, as his grin intensifies. He chews his food like an animal, and begins to speak before he even starts to swallow, breaking the silence.

“You know, Alvie, I think you should just let me handle this one.”

Griffin’s voice is much louder than before.

Alvie’s mask of calmness deteriorates as he hears Griffin speak, and his glance moves toward the square tiles of the floor. Griffin rises from his seat, grabbing his coat and hat, and pushing in his chair. He keeps his eyes focused on Alvie as he walks directly by him towards the door of the diner. Alvie’s eyes are still locked on to the cold floor.

As Griffin opens the old metallic door triggering the bell to ring above his head, Alvie stands and looks at the back of Griffin’s intimidating figure. The movement of Alvie’s left hand matches the golden bell above the door. He imagines running after Griffin to stop him, but he cannot seem to step forward. Gusts of wind enter the diner as Griffin exits, and Alvie can no longer see him. The door slams and silences the wind. Alvie’s hand settles into a relaxed state, and his eyes begin to wander around the room in their usual manner.

Justice

Will Giangrande '19

“We will be closing in ten minutes.” The lights began to flicker off as the once neon green walls with chipped paint faded into the black color that came from the night sky. The machines came to a halting stop like a train ceasing in the middle of its route. Water dripped from the top of the popcorn ceiling that hung above the tiled floor. If someone were to stand underneath for hours on end, they would look no different than just coming back from a water park. Through the cracked window, the parking lot appeared empty. Except for the Dodge Challenger that had rust taking over the exterior and small creatures crawling out of the exhaust pipe. The car seemed to have been sitting in this dingy parking lot for more than fifty years. Across the street stood a bar where at this point in the night held only a few measly people. When looking at each person, they resembled exactly what this town was at its very core; lifeless and sad.

Most towns across the U.S. had been modernized; buildings renovated, streets paved, and stores updated. Although closing time was fast approaching, the building showed the same qualities during the day as it had at night; death. Moving from the interior to the exterior, the building had a dark brown color, tinted windows, and blood came rushing from the side of it only a few years earlier. The incident took place on Halloween night when a man from inside took another man's clothes out of the washing machine and put in his own. The other man came rushing from the bar across the street, with a few drinks in him, and began punching the guy outside. He punched him so hard that blood came gushing out of his mouth like a Hawaiian Punch drink being spat out by a young child.

This lone spot outside the laundromat exemplified the staleness of Gravesville and everything involved in it. It was considered bad luck for anyone to stand in the spot where the man was brutally punched. Twenty minutes after closing time, a figure appeared from the scene of the crime from just a few years before. A dark shadow was cast upon his face and as light came across it, a woman's features became noticeable. Long dark hair, blue eyes, and only ten teeth remained in her mouth. Her teeth had the look of the carnival game after the player hit half of the balloons with the dart. What could an elderly woman possibly be doing out this late? She began to slowly walk in the direction towards street, but her walk resembled nothing more than a snail slugging its way along grassy ground. Looking up at the clock, it read 11:30. After “walking” to the street, the clock read 11:45. Across the street stood one cop who had been in the area waiting for something to go down at the bar. He shot a quick glance in the direction of the lady, but then looked off in the opposite direction. He did not imagine what he was getting himself into.

The lady continued to walk hesitantly towards the street squinting and trying to read the road sign. She resembled a young child who couldn't see the whiteboard and needed to move up in the classroom. As she continued to struggle to see the walk sign, she impulsively started walking without a care in the world. The walk sign began counting down the seconds until it turned orange. “16,15,14,13...0.” The lady remained only in the first half of the cross walk. As she walked along, The Dodge Challenger appeared out of the parking lot of the laundromat. The inert and lifeless car was indeed alive. “Creek, Creek!” The car's sound was no different than an aged door that needed to be greased. As it continued along its way, so did the woman. The clock now read 11:52. Not a sound existed among Gravesville except the creaking coming from the so-

called “car”. But, in one moment, Gravesville became more alive than any other town in the United States. “Slam!” Samantha's legs shot up in the air, eventually hitting the ground with a “Boom!” She was no different than a snowball rolling down a hill, she continued to roll until meeting the side of the traffic post. “What the hell just happened?!!!” She yelled at the top of her lungs. She tried to gather as much information as she could, but the Dodge Challenger had driven away. Samantha scanned the area in search of some medical help or anyone. Out of the darkness came the cop. A sigh of relief came from Samantha, as she finally got what she was looking for. But, there was one problem.

She had forgot one thing that continued to come back and haunt her. After being so shaken up, the fact of being an illegal immigrant did not come across her mind. If this cop came in her direction, she could be found out and a possible deportation was in the cards. Fifteen years had passed and Samantha had miraculously made it without being thrown out. But, this lengthy stretch could be put to an end because of a selfish driver. The throbbing pain running throughout her arm forced her to think that she needed serious medical help. But, what was more important? Possibly dying due to this injury, or being thrown out of the country that she now calls home. The place where she does her laundry, eats her food, and enjoys life.

The cop slowly inched his way over to her, and she could slowly see her life in America coming to an end. It seemed as though the closer he came to her, the faster time sped up. Samantha realized this was the end for her, the feeling she had in her arm was no different than the feeling she had experienced in her ear. It was time to give in. The cop was now in the very spot that Samantha was hit, Samantha being another twenty feet away. This was it, no turning back now. Sweat was running down the side of her head, connecting with the two strands of hair beside her ear. 20 feet...15 feet...10 feet.. 5 feet. The cop then extended his arm out in hopes that she could grab onto it, and hesitantly, she did. “Are you alright?!” The cop questioned in a pressing fashion, “Uh I think so, I can barely feel my arm,” Samantha replied apprehensively. “That jerk drove off without even getting out of his car, don't you worry, we're on him.” “That's great to hear,” Samantha replied tentatively. “Let's get you to a doctor, but first I need to see some identification so that I can report the accident and get this back to the police department.” “That won't be necessary, I'm fine” Samantha began pulling her arm off of the officer, but he held on persistently. “No, I need your identification.” “It's fine, that accident was okay,” she replied trying to walk away. “Lady, I don't care what you think of it, show me your ID!” She had to give in.

Memories of her time in the U.S. began to flood her mind as Samantha saw them coming to a close. She began feeling around her pockets trying to buy all of the time in the world, and then she finally found it. Giving up her ID to the officer meant so much more than just letting him see it. He peeled open the page of the ID and his eyes lit up in disbelief at what he saw. In bold letters, it read, **SAMANTHA IGLESIAS: CITIZEN OF MEXICO.**

Running Through Ferns

Eric Ochsner '19

He parked amongst the tall grass as he usually did. The black lab and retriever were both wiggling with excitement as both dogs sprung out the back of the car and darted into the woods. The man does not worry and tries to keep pace with them as he hops the stone wall and begins into the thick green covered forest. The forest was lush and filled with life. The birds of the air serenaded him as he walked through the familiar woods. Squirrels chased each other and butterflies fluttered amongst the trees. Soon everywhere he looked was thick woods covered with a leafy basin which caused his steps to sound like mouse traps going off each step. The crunch was so loud he thought he could hear his steps echo amongst the trees. When he stopped and looked around he couldn't help but feel free feeling so far away from the city.

This peaceful moment was soon disrupted by the intense thudding that could be heard in the distance. It sounded as if a herd of buffalo were running toward him. Yet it was just the dogs frolicking around the woods, also running with what seemed a sense of freedom. Soon the party came upon a bubbling stream. The stream had tall grass that artfully ran along each side and frogs could be seen laying on stones waiting for unfortunate flies. The dogs splash through stream disregarding its beauty causing the grass to bend and the frogs to jump from their respective places. The man somewhat graciously tries to hop from rock to rock, but he failed to see the slippery algae on the second to last stone. The man's foot slipped into the shallow river causing his shoe to flood with water. His step now sounded like a soggy crunch as he grudgingly continued further into the forest.

The man and his dogs continue trekking through the woods until they come to a steep hill covered in ferns. The man looks at his dogs who respond with a position of excitement. All at once they ran down together. Running through the ferns at full speed together. Each fern hugged his leg as he went down giving a tickling sensation up and down his legs. As he got to the bottom, the dogs made no attempt of stopping and ran toward the clearing. He couldn't help but chuckle at the eager dogs who direly wanted their reward. As he walked down the path to clearing he began to feel the cool breeze run across his face. The sun was pouring into the path shooting light into the forest between the tree's. As he made it to clearing he felt that same feeling he has felt every time he's been there for the past 30 years; that he was home.

The clearing poured out into these lush green fields with a giant reservoir which seemed to go back for miles. The view would make any person stop and have to take it in. The long tall grass danced in the wind twisting and bending to the beat of the wind. The dogs were already down the stone rap into the crystal clear water. They had retrieved a piece of drift wood and were splashing around with it in the water. Along the water line lay large egrets and heron all nesting within the surrounding tree's. King fishers can be seen diving into the water like torpedos hoping to strike a target. Then up in the sky, like the man had hoped, he saw the eagle. The white headed bird soared proudly above taking note of every motion. He always envied them for their attention to detail, something he never could teach himself.

The energy of the reservoir was like nothing else in the world. Everywhere he looked he felt nothing but happiness and freedom. The air was sweet and caused him to reminisce of his childhood here. Not a thing had changed and he couldn't have been happier.

The House on the Hill

Jack Kelly '19

The driveway is long and leads straight up to the garage. The rocks make each car shake and rattle as it approaches the house. You would not want to drive on the soft grass in fear of leaving tire impressions. The trees surrounding the house act as a fortress wall from the wilderness, protecting from the unwanted. When in the house, a feeling of nostalgia arises, even if it's your first time there. You feel as if this was a place in the back of your mind that you just happened to forget.

The air here usually has a hint of coldness, and in the morning the grass is covered in condensation. If there was no cold air, the house would have no reason to stay warm. And if there was no house, the land would be swallowed whole by the surrounding forest. The house's interest to please the guests keeps it standing. It is still and calm, along with its surroundings; however, the inside contains swinging doors and screeching floors. The happiness created by the house can exit the door, but it can only make it so far before it loses strength. The house has a deteriorated exterior, but you can see that it was once a house of beauty, almost like an antique. It reminds me of my grandfather—old but filled with life. The house has planted its roots deep into the ground and claimed the land as its own. For if there was another house on this plate of land, it would never have become a home.

It has grown accustomed to the changes of the season. The house knows what to do when it's wet, freezing, and unbearably hot. The beams of support are like the bones of a mammoth. The walls are its skin. After a long day of labor, the comfort of the house will make you feel as if you have built it with your own hands. The front and back porches are a perfect size, with sliding doors for entry and exit. There are chairs and tables to accompany the many visitors. The inside of the house seems to pour out onto the decks. There is nothing special about the front door. In fact, it is not a front door at all, but rather a simple entrance at ground level leading into the mud room. The walls of the mud room are the first thing you see. Their intense, vivid green paint is just like the walls at a waterpark. The coating is strong enough to prevent mud from tarnishing the toxic color. The mud room allows the childish humor of the house to be seen by every visitor.

The objects that make up the house are not as old as they may seem. Like tombstones, you can see the last time someone paid a visit. However, each object looks as if it had given up long ago. When you are in the rooms, you feel overwhelmed by your surroundings, but cozy with the protection from outside. It has the appeal of an old motel room, yet it still has the potential to put you right to sleep. When you wake up, you may feel at home until you glance out the window. Its comfort and appeal initially causes distress, but after some time, it is the reason you choose to stay.

The house sucks in its visitors. After each one spends their time in its walls, they are spit back out into the wild with nothing but the house's name on their forehead. It is a dump that turns into a sanctuary—a refuge for those seeking its peace. The house does no wrong, because it is a part of nature. This house grew from the ground just as a tree sprouts up. This house has four sides and one roof. It has three entrances and one garage. It is enough for you to stay. The house holds your precious memories, only returning them once you arrive again.

Why the Courts Are Unjust

Liam McClure '20

My partying days have long since been over, but that doesn't mean I don't miss them. I reminisce about them, dream about them, but I know that those days are gone. And that's okay. Everyone has phases in life, and the "crazy blackout nights" phase ended as soon as college did. Now I'm the cubicle and unsatisfied wife phase. I guess I could've continued the lifestyle that I once led, but I chose to settle down, become an accountant, like every real man does.

But I didn't make the choice for the sake of making it. The circumstances surrounding the last party that I went to made sure that that choice was made. For the record, I'm not responsible for the events that unfolded that night. Everyone loves to insist that I am, but trust me... I'm not. She slipped and fell onto that knife. Relax, she's ok now. A quick hospital trip and some fancy Band-aids was all it took to fix her up. Even more reason to believe that I didn't do it: I would've finished the job. Hypothetically.

We had dated freshman year, nothing serious. They always say boys go to Jupiter to get more stupider, but girls go to room 256 of McAllister Hall to cheat on me with my best friend. I didn't hold a grudge about it, but that's not to say I forgave her. Or Tim. But, truly and honestly, I would never hurt anyone on purpose. At the same time, I wouldn't be all that upset if one of them fell onto a knife under suspicious circumstances. Which is exactly what happened. She tripped onto the knife, unprompted. I was there in the kitchen making myself a peanut bitty and jelly, I turned around, lo and behold she was there with a knife in her side.

"What the hell man?"

That's Tim. If there was one thing I could delete from the universe, it would be mosquitoes. If I could delete two things, it would be mosquitoes and Tim. I would most definitely fight Tim. But I didn't. You see, she and Tim got into a bit of a relationship after they conspired against me freshman year. Like I said, not holding a grudge about it. That's why I handled it so well.

"Well, would you look at that."

"I'm calling the cops."

Meanwhile, she was on the floor calling me various expletives and other nonsensical ramblings.

"Do it, you won't."

In hindsight, acting tough and aloof was not the right move. Tim and I punched for a bit after alerting the authorities. The party quickly became very lame. Who would've thought?

There is, of course, the question of why I'm not in jail. Well, because I didn't do it. There weren't any fingerprints on the knife. Because it was on the floor. I also was very smart to wear some oven mitts while I was making my PBJ. So, there was really no suspicion. She had forgotten the events of her misstep onto the knife. Something about adrenaline and trauma. I don't know, I'm not a psychologist.

Given the evidence provided, it was decided that there wasn't enough proof to put me in jail. My underserved punishment was a large fine payed to her and several hours of community service. And that is my story about why the courts are unjust.

But I didn't do it. I'm also not crazy, trust me, I would know. How would an insane person put forth such a compelling argument. Thanks for listening.

CONTRIBUTORS

Jack Carroll '19 was compelled to write “Lessons of Innovation” after realizing that the “real world” which his parents talked about was as real as they had described. He hopes to share this pivotal experience with his readers. @senorhugo

Will Giangrande '19 wrote “Justice” based on a personal experience that he witnessed. In addition, he used this story as a way to put a twist on a daily event (doing laundry), and make it something many people wouldn't consider common. @wjg23

Jack Kane '19 wrote “Whistle and Go Fishing in Heaven” on fishing and the rhythm of nature. Kane originally wrote this essay for his AP English Language and Composition course, mimicking an essay from Michael Chabon's collection, *Manhood for Amateurs*. After a few style changes, this piece became the essay Kane sent to colleges.

Jack Kelly '19 was inspired to write “The House on the Hill” as a result of the calmness and beauty from a retreat that he attended. In this story he aspires to make readers think about the comfort of home. @jkelly6

Nash Lovallo '19 was inspired to write his essay “Of Woods and Open Fields” because of the impact the nature had on his life during the events of the essay, and the impact it has had on him following the insightful experience. @nash.p.lovallo

Liam McClure '20 wrote “Why the Courts Are Unjust” with the voice of a deranged persona. He created this story during the summer while taking a creative writing class at Fairfield University. @liam.mcclure

Eric Ochsner '19 wrote “Running Through Ferns” about a childhood place where he went to think. He describes the woods he went running in with his dogs, who have since passed from the time the story has been written, and he dedicates it to them. He hopes to inspire his readers to take some time to remember a special place in their lives. @eric.ochsner

John O'Connor '19 wrote “A Matter of Business” to demonstrate how one's mind can often be two-sided, with one side gaining dominance in the decision-making process. John wrote this piece in the summer while pondering the reasoning behind his own decisions. @john_oconnor66

David Smeriglio '19 wrote “A Hero's Struggle” to try and show the frailty of all people, even those we might view as “tough”. He wanted to raise awareness of the problems soldiers face after coming back from war. This story was written for his creative writing class. @dsmerg05

Liam Woods '19 wrote “Cliff Jumping” as a flashback to twelve years prior from when the piece was written. This essay puts Woods back into the mindset of a five-year-old version of himself, struggling with a deep fear for the first time, in response to a prompt in his AP English Language and Composition class. He submitted this essay to colleges. Twitter: @_liam_woods

