



The Bellarmine Review
Volume 74
Spring 2016

The Bellarmine Review

In Memory of Joseph Kulaga, Class of 2019



Fairfield Prep's Annual Literary Magazine

A Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

I hold the hope that as you, the reader, navigate your way through this sea of Fairfield Prep's greatest literary hits of the 2015-2016 academic year, you allow each piece to open your mind to new thoughts and beliefs. However, I would be remiss in not noticing the countless hours that went into the construction of this review. I would first like to thank all of the writers who are featured in this compilation and everyone who submitted pieces for the review. Without your bold display of courage to share your work with the world, this review could not be published. Next, I would like to thank all the members of the Creative Writing Club that met after school on Wednesdays. This year's submissions are a result of your vision and dedication to building a series of moving and inspiring literary pieces. I would finally like to thank Mr. Sather for giving his time and wisdom to the formation of these great works. While I know the club failed to provide snacks on Wednesday meetings, I still hope you enjoyed guiding the creation of the final production as much as we, the club, enjoyed building it. This review was created to challenge the accepted beliefs handed down to this generation. So, as you read it, I ask you to sit back, relax, and open your mind and heart to wherever this journey takes you.

Thank You,
Niko Lignore

Staff Credits

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Artwork	R.J. Bellito '16, Grant Stone '16, Jihad Rogers '16

Mission Statement

We desire to publish poetry and prose that is clear, concise, and evokes the senses, taking the reader to the writer's imagined place through strong writing and a good sense of rhythm. It is believed in the 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 an accomplished venue to acknowledge their living truth.

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Poetry

The Masks We Wear

R.J. Bellito '16

The masks we wear
are made to bear
the sum of all our fears.

This broken body
Who's dire folly
Has soaked the veil in tears.

A mind made to tally
a plastic reality
Both cold and harsh to touch.

Yet this forlorn machination
This cloaked incarceration
Has become his precarious crutch.

But to break these gossamer walls and chains
Wings will form within their place.

Let loose the candid, unabated scream
Then it's seen, you've been listening to a dream...

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Optima Bella

Vincent Nguyen '16

Our Father who art in heaven, save us.
Hallowed be thy name, free us from our fear,
Thy kingdom come, cease the world of its fuss,
Thy will be done, for the end may be near.

The righteous fights for the oppressed and poor,
The opposers fight for their own belief.
We suffer in violence's uproar
Victors bask in joyous celebrations.
Conquered will weep in continuous pain
We pray for the divine peace of our nation
When we are the bane in another's gain,
Almighty Father! - I loathe their actions
Violence creates the world's distractions.

Why Can't I Be Pretty?

Jihad Rogers '16

Why can't I be pretty too?
Why won't they let me be like you?
I can never be like me,
So who do they want me to be?

I talk like you because that's who I am
But you all want for me is me to be a sham.
It's harder than it seems
To give up on your dreams.

That I can't be me
Then who should I be?
Cause somehow boys are different, true
The holds same for girls like you.

I dress like you for the same reasons,
I like to change with the going seasons
Even though fashion
Isn't my passion
I care too
Just to be like you.

I live my life walking in shame
Thinking that I am somehow to blame.

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What crime did I commit
To send others into such a fit?
What crime could I commit
To be thrown into this enteral pit?

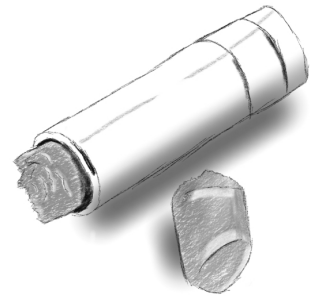
I was happy, ecstatic when you let me dress like you,
Nothing different just something new.
I felt like I could be pretty too
I got this confidence from you, and you.

I got to be more of me
The more I took from thee,
I got to be something more than free
I was finally allowed to be more of me.

You gave me makeup
We talked of breakups
I finally felt like I belong
Oh, why was I so wrong?

So came that fateful day
When I had debts to pay
For having fun being free
For living life being me,

You made me think you were helping me
Unlocking the cage setting the bird free.



Jihad Rogers

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All that you could crush it
In your angers, in your fit,

When one chose me over you,
You changed all shades of red and blue,
Your fall from grace hurt me so
But nothing as bad the the next day though.

I paraded me around
Treated me like a clown,
Once I was loved for being me
Now I don't see a shred of sympathy,

You gave me tags
All vindictive flags
That once crushed me
Now barely brush me.

I have given up on being free
There is nothing in it for me
Except the hurt and pain
That drive men insane.

This is all I have to say today.
I don't intend to cause dismay,
Just one question I have for you
Why couldn't I be pretty too?

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My Brother's Elegy

Dane Audet '16

Now that you're gone the world laughs less,
The world is less bright and doesn't smile as much.
We miss the light that was always shining around you.

The world misses you.

I didn't know how to react
When we found out. Everyone was still and emotionless;
Once the feelings of truth hit they never subsided.

The family misses you.

Everyone you met you made smile,
You warmed the heart and soul of anyone.
You would help with any problem they had.

Everyone loves you.

Do Not Give Up On Me

Braden Furio '16

Do not give up on me,
For all the mistakes I now see,
It is time now to set them free.

A worried mother in my family tree,
The disappointment I dread to see,
Do not give up on me.

An angry mother is hard to see,
My regrets overwhelm me,
It is time now to set them free.

A loving mother is hard to flee,
Here and now is where I stand.
Do not give up on me.

A forgiving mother listens to my plea.
My insecurities get the best of me,
It is time now to set them free.

Mother, becoming the man I am meant to be,
I am grateful you did not give up on me.
Do not give up on me.
I can now set myself free.

Broken Sestina

Jihad Rogers '16

Broken home
Crying shame
Drunk husband
Beats his wife
Hungry kids
Happy, dies

Happy wedding
Crying parents
Hungry for cake
Beat of the music
Broken glass by
Drunk n'fun uncle

Drunk with power
Hungry for more
Happiness loss
Beaten enemies
Broken Families
Crying freedom

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Crying baby
Broken toy
Beaten parents make
Happy faces
Drunk with laughter, but
Hungry for milk

Hungry people
Crying, more
Drunk vagrants with
Happy pain
Broken men
Beat in streets

Beat of the drum
Happy dancers
Drunk flirts
Hungry, what's that?
Broken English
Crying, out "Shots!"

Broken people drunk with their sadness
Cry their eyes out until they're hungry,
Lives are filled, chains broken and now they're happy.

Sea of Emotions

Matthew Roselli '16

We all come from the sea, but are not all of the sea.
We must return to it again and again until the day
We children of the tides are free.

We take the chances and opportunities as we
Leave only what was touched along the way.
We all come from the sea, but are not all of the sea.

The blue water holds something deep and of mystery.
We must all dive through those rough waves of the bay.
We children of the tides are free.

It's not smooth sailing, a brutal swim through the sea,
The cold water bites your soul, treading water each day.
We all come from the sea, but are not all of the sea.

The sea beats you uncontrollably, like a machine.
You're nothing but a rag in the spin cycle astray.
We children of the tides are free.

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We push the limits, but sometimes discover to be,
The limits sometimes push back, the price we must pay.
We all come from the sea, but are not all of the sea.

Maybe it is true, there are plenty of fish in the sea,
But sometimes we drown in our own dismay,
We all come from the sea, but are not all of the sea.
We children of the tides are free.

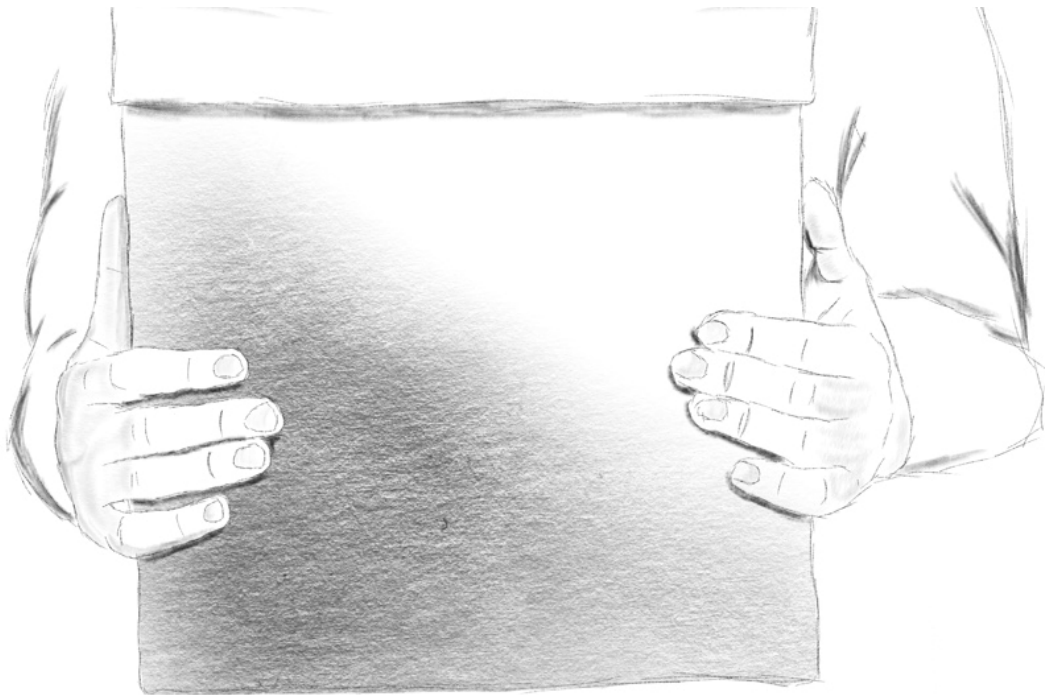


Jihad Rogers

Stolen Memories

AJ Palmieri '16

Sitting in a empty room surrounded by boxes,
Nothing feels the same.
The more I remember, the more I fall into darkness.
It was too soon.
Nobody was expecting it, except for them.
These boxes are filled with possessions, memories.
These boxes are all I have left of them.
A truck came the next day to take them away,
To take away what few memories I still had of my
grandparents.



Jihad Rogers

Lost Love

Julio Palencia '16

The beautiful sun rises high above,
Seagulls soar through the air,
Free to fly high. Looking up,
All I see is the blue sky.
Sinking my hand into the sand,
A glove. Watching the white angels pass,
Those white doves flying majestically, miles to go.
Not many people are seen walking by.
Sitting in the sand, mourning my lost love.
Now my heart is left to cry in a vault,
And my mind is somewhere, lost, left in woe.
I stand up,
Knowing it was not my fault, yet blaming myself for letting go.
I just wish I had fought a little longer.

Freedom Avenged

Liam Traynor '16

Farewell sweet freedom, you will be missed.
I will always remember how you let me do and say what I pleased,
Your generosity will not be forgotten.
And let it be known that your death will be avenged,
Totalitarianism will not get away with this unforgivable crime.
Rest in peace dear freedom, your death will not be in vain,
Your legacy shall live on.



Jihad Rogers

Schoolyard Blues

Sam Britt '16

The hard plastic chair pushing on my back,
My brain struggling to awake from slumber.
Hand clasped around lead, covered in lumber,
This essay is what I start to attack.

Early morning and my mind seems to lack
The energy needed to remember
What I once did study in September,
When the classes started to come back.

Why must I sit in the lasting boredom,
To learn things that are pointless to my life?
Why must we be judged for not knowing things?
Facts seemingly thrown at us at random.
These unimportant facts have become our strife.
We want to learn, school destroys this feeling.



Jihad Rogers

Rise Up, Courageous Ones

Sam Britt '16

Greatness will appear where others will fall.
Where others give in to their inner most fears,
Greats rise, with courage, and answer the call.

When the opposition stands against us tall.
When they attack our walls and evil comes near.
Greatness will appear where others will fall.

Their faces immortalized in this hall.
For who we now look at and shed a tear.
Greats rise, with courage, and answer the call.

Across dangerous lands they had to crawl, to protect us,
until the coast was clear.

Greatness will appear where others will fall.
Lesser men stumbled and dropped the ball.

When all of the cowards stepped back to the rear.
Greats rise, with courage, and answer the call.
For the safety and freedom of us all,
These brave and courageous men are not here.

Greatness will appear where others will fall.
Greats rise, with courage, and answer a call.

Bridgeport

Nate Vareen '16

Hear constant sounds
Taste the thin air
Feel what it's like
Smell the poison
See the people
City Unveils

See the buildings
Feel the cement
Smell the fresh air
Taste the fast food
Hear the traffic
City unveils

Feel the warm air
Smell the ocean
Hear the waves
See the Ferry
Taste salty air
City unveils

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Smell the odor
Hear the ball bounce
Taste dripping sweat
Feel exhaustion
See the sunset
City unveils

Taste the hunger
Feel the danger
Hear the sirens
Smell the garbage
See the projects
City unveils

City unveils
Smell of failure
Taste of failure
Feel of failure
Hear the failure
See the failure

Smell and taste it
Hear and feel it
See the City

To the People of the Sky

Jihad Rogers '16

Radiant love made of your hearts up high,
Is the only blessing of our filth lives.
It's light and splendor raining down like knives,
Beautiful compared to siblings and I
Made in the image of beasts cursed to die,
Whose only goal is to mate with their wives,
Spreading their brutish seed those futile drives.
I pale compared to my brothers up high.
Know this, people of the sky, we aren't fools.
We struggle and strive, yet you reap rewards
That we have sown in back-breaking labor.
You have used us, we of the earth, as tools
In cities of light you rule us like lords
But soon, fools, your throats will meet our sabers.



Jihad Rogers

The Original Gloucester Man

Drew Gardella '16

From shore, we look to the high seas
Waiting for our men, spending days.
But with backs to the wind, they sail.
Working aboard hulls made of beech,
Their return is our only wish.
But for now, we can only wail.

They remain out there hunting whale,
Even when wind rises the seas.
Sometimes marooning them for days,
And leaving them without a sail,
Adrift on lifeboats made of beech.
For food, water and warmth they wish.

Suddenly a huge tail goes wish
And seeking revenge is the whale.
Madly swimming, pushing the seas.
And leaving the men in a daze,
Seeking to finish off their sail,
It breaks in half the hulls of beech.

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Now, they can only hope for beach.
Praying to return as we wish.
But for now, we can only wail.
The horizon, showing the seas
desolate now like this for days.
The sailors can no longer sail.

And missing their yearning to sail,
Staying adrift on planks of beech,
Little wind to offer its wish,
Angry and fearful of the whale,
Land's hardness and warmth, not one sees.
Lack of needs leaves them in a daze,

And yet, we still stand here for days,
No longer expecting our sailors
to return. And on the beach
We lay, counting on the wind's wish
In our hair, and no longer wail.

We find acceptance in the seas.
And for days their limp bodies sail.
Beech planks owned by the current's wish.
The angry whale sees this and laughs.

Most Placid Cobalt

Robert Van Batenburg '18

The Sea is a tempest who cannot be tamed.
She is often calm, with a most tranquil soul,
But when she is hot, her wat'ry complexion is aflame.

Poseidon provokes the wind, the waves, the rain!
The oceans are made frantic from pole to pole,
The sea is a tempest who cannot be tamed.

Swell after swell, the shore can bar'ly restrain.
Seamen are wary as the sky grows dark as coal.
She laughs as we try and triumph in vain.

"Lower the sails, Close the Hatches!" the captain proclaims
"A storm is upon us, our danger is grave, as is its toll."
The Sea is a tempest who cannot be tamed.

The wooden sarcophagus rolls in the waves - again and again.
Lines fly, beams plunge, and finally man has lost his control.
She laughs as we try and triumph in vain.

The hull is breached, and the ship is overcame.
Downward, downward it sinks as it's swalled whole.
The Sea is a tempest who cannot be tamed,
She laughs as we try and triumph in vain.

Moving On

Josh DeFrancisco '16

I'm deciding to leave my past behind,
So, if I owe you something like money,
Sorry, but I've moved on.

Simplicity

Harrison Graham '16

Simplicity is the seed of our tree.

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Resting Place

Joseph B. Hopkins '18

She rests so peaceful, so still, as an endless desert sits with no wind.
Quite similarly, she rests like dust, with no movement and no whim
To make a shift in the sands of time,
No difference can she mime.

But before we go to that resting place, so dreary and so cold,
I must show to you, solicitous one, where my mother once had told
Stories of unmistakeable beauty,
Tales she had concocted truly.

In that chair o'er yonder, which has not felt the touch of a human since
She had taken us in that ancient seat and held us like a prince
Of wondrous times so great and daring.
Oh, the chair now rests so barren.

In times of fright, my brothers and I would scramble there
For the harsh torrents of time could not reach us, where
Knights could live in chivalrous glory
Ever could we escape from worry.

But that chair, that represented all good and innocence in the world
Has become nothing but a symbol of the darkness unfurled.
In the moment of her fleeting last breath,
Crept upon her was shadowy death,

Though you ask, why should such a thing remain in her stead?
And I say, for monuments are made for the dead
That have impacted our lives even after demise.
For the stories she spoke remain at all times

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In that chair o'er yonder, she had created her own sacred space,
But you care not for the chair, you wish to see the resting place
Of the woman that had also touched you
But I must say, that place rests in front of you.

Haikus

Haiku

Liam Kells '16

Feels older than them
Knowing that he knows nothing
Wise beyond his years

Love and Change

Danny McCarthy '16

I love you to death,
But love is a cruel mistress,
I am not loved back.

From a small pebble
A pond will be displaced.
But, not forever changed.

Where the Heart Is

Brendan Carey '16

When you are alone
And lost with nowhere to go,
Go and find your home.

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Prose

Wax Dancers

Kevin Gallagher '17

They always enticed me – scintillating and hollow, as they sat there, pure. Pious, they watched, far removed and poised on their throne of needles. Their palpable presence dominated the room as they filled it with light. Almost like a figurine dancing capriciously in her little jewelry box, until it's shut on her – the candles that is.

My family had always been traditional, engaging in antediluvian practices. In between visits from the tooth fairy, I blindly accepted them all, except the candles. When our living room was pervaded with the smell of a moribund pine tree, my father ignited three candles to place on the tree that we killed as a testament to a man we have never even met. To him, these sticks of wax were sacred. They burned with an invigorating flame externally as they lit up the room, but I refused to see their light. I wanted them under a bushel basket, like leaves trampled underfoot. The candles were like a bad taste lingering in my mouth, like pickles or salt. I hated salt.

They were otherworldly, the candles. Separate, detached, and would leave me alone if I left them alone. They seemed elevated, looking down and judging my habits, my life. Their glow never faltered, they would only cast shadows that would dance on the wall as apparitions. Sometimes they chased me. Why did my dad want these ghosts? Why have a dangerous flame on a dying tree? Would the spirits finally engulf me?

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Would it not start a fire?

The fire never came.

One day I could hear the recess bell reverberate in my ear. The cold, bitter air slashed at my cheeks as I dawdled into the line to go inside the building.

A classmate looked intently at me and chided, "I heard you have candles on your Christmas tree."

"I don't know what you are talking about" I denied. I heard a crow sound in the distance.

My friend decided to join: "What are you talking about, Kevin. I saw them yesterday at your house."

"No."

Another spectator accused me, "Yeah, I heard you do have candles."

Once again I denied them, "I do not have candles, and that's final." I heard the crows again in the distance. They laughed at me.

I despised the candles even more after that, so beautiful and enticing, yet so destructive. One remark to a rumor. One ember to a flame. A flame to a fire. A fire to an apparition...

On Christmas Eve, suddenly our power went out; a fuse blew. Worried and without light, my family gathered in the living room by the decaying tree to take refuge in the light of the candles. The room was dark, except for the glowing sticks of wax. As the sun subsided and the golden sunset sank to grief, so did our light. As the last golden hue faded beyond

the distant horizon, my family nodded off to sleep. I could see the candles, are they even real? As my father snored, I lumbered off the couch and surreptitiously crawled over to the pedestal. They towered above me, set almost out of my grasp by invisible hands. I could see the small jewelry box figure dance and twirl. She threw her light to all corners of the room. Then it happened. The dancer struck the needle and sparked an ember.

I have no idea what to do, maybe I should run, or maybe I should get my dad, but the darkness is so overwhelming that I have no idea, maybe I can forget, and run away and hide so he will leave me alone although he is always there and fire and will never leave me alone. Always judging. So righteous. So distant. Inhuman. Yes...

I outreached my hand, and with two fingers extinguished the ember. Then I killed the dancers one by one. The room was dark. I saw that it was good. Because sometimes you can see better in the dark. For a short time. But other times the flame seems even brighter when reignited. It can take years. But sometimes you have to put out the fire for the brighter fire to come.

They always enticed me – scintillating and hallow, as they sat there, pure. Almost like a figurine dancing capriciously in her little jewelry box, until it's opened up on her – the candles that is. I look forward to putting candles on my Christmas tree.

The Driver

Harrison Graham '16

Michael Scott '16

Daryl Jamison kept a lump sum of cash in the second drawer of his nightstand, on the right side of the bed in the master chamber. A foot to the right of that stand is a window, around a meter tall and three quarters as wide, that let the placid New England sun in on spring days such as this one. There was no better location for a window in the whole single-story suburban home. Its view spanned one-hundred and eighty degrees of unaltered wilderness, with tangles of thorn bushes cottoning the feet of lanky and ancient oaks. Perhaps the best part was its elevation: a measly foot off of the ground, it immersed the viewer in a literal equality with nature.

"We can literally just step right in," Mitch explained in a hushed tone, hands on his companions' shoulders. The three college students studied the house silently, drumming their fingers on various surfaces inside of Jacob's aged sedan. The day's tension was palpable in the stagnant air of the vehicle, poisoned sickly-sweet with a paper air freshener that was wrinkled beyond any recognizable shape.

Fear seemed to grasp Christopher the hardest of the three, pushing on his ribcage with each steady breath. He gripped the steering wheel and stared at his feet, his steeled grip unwavering despite the growing moisture from his sweat on the wheel's leather. Aaron, the third of the group, kept

his usual nonchalant mask on, though his fingertips twitched against the door handle every several seconds in erratic rhythms.

"Jesus, guys, lighten up. Molly was rotten anyway, right?" Mitch slapped Aaron and Chris simultaneously, with a boyish chuckle.

"She wasn't your girlfriend. She was mine." Aaron sounded artificially cool, even more so than his normal characteristically relaxed comportment normally included.

"Well, you sure talked about her like she was some sort of hawk trying to pick out your brain. Don't tell me you're getting cold feet?"

"I'm not, I'm not," Aaron said with a rapid, dismissive wave. "It's just, y'know. It's her dad's money, not hers that we're taking."

"It's a few hundred bucks, and if he's just leaving it around he obviously doesn't care. Bet he'd use it for booze money too."

"Booze money, huh?" Chris turned to look out the side window, tracing the cracks in the pavement with his eyes. They parked across the street and a small distance down from the home, in a small gravel outcropping that blended in almost too perfectly with the steel blue-grey of the car. Camouflage, intentional or not, didn't matter in any event. The Jamisons were away from home, as they were every Saturday, and the houses were so spaced apart on the deep suburban road

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that it seemed a wonder there was overpopulation issues in the world.

"Well, that's sort of what it is, right?" Mitch chided, though he took his hand from Chris. Out of the three, Chris was the most reserved when it came to the issue of unfavorable college expenses. He was no stranger to the topic, of course, otherwise he wouldn't have been planning a home invasion to repay a small contraband debt and some personal damage. There was no way they could sneak several hundred dollars away from their families and friends, and the two insisted that their victim "had it coming" and "wouldn't bat an eye." Not that Chris particularly cared; he couldn't let his irresponsibility become known to others, and if that meant a wrong to cover a wrong, so be it.

"Well, listen," Mitch broke the silence. "We're going to be two minutes maximum. This'll crack that window in no time." He fingered the edge of a newly-purchased crowbar, seemingly eager to use it.

"Remember the signal text. If we get out but we need you, Luciano's." Aaron whispered the name to Chris, as if the whole world were waiting to hear that one word.

In another moment they were gone, Mitch nonchalantly hiding the crowbar in his ruffled, oversized winter coat. They walked up the driveway and around a line of hedges with surprising confidence before stopping briefly to examine the home. They spoke to each

other for a moment, shrugged, and walked. The two disappeared behind the house, first the stout blur of Mitch, then the lanky shadow of Aaron slipped into the unknown.

There was an immediate stillness in the car, a pure and placid silence that trembled only with Chris's staggered breathing. The September noontime was cold, but what little heat the sun offered collected in the car, even with the engine off. Still, Chris wrung his hands and sighed, squeezing his palms together before releasing them in silent hope that fidgeting would serve as an adequate distraction from the maddening wait.

He tried reading for a time: his phone, a sports magazine left in the back seat, even the warning stickers on the dashboard, but every time he trained his eyes on something the view trembled and blurred. Instead he ran through the options in his head: if they were caught, he could simply claim he didn't know what they were doing. They respected him and would vouch for him. If the family came home, he'd probably have just enough time to pull out his phone and send a frantic warning text to Aaron.

None of the circumstances he explored gave any relief to the growing fear. It seemed to twist around in his stomach, gnawing and squirming like a starved, incessant rat. He thought of his studies in brief, fleeting memories. His professors, the weight of his textbook, the colors on the university library walls all danced like

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moths in a fantasy he tried to escape into through desperate recollection. When his mind reached involuntarily out towards his family and friends, he recoiled, like a hand touching a flame. Regret immediately followed, as stinging pain follows a burn.

In the distance, where the sky tangled with bare tree branches, a flock of birds appeared. They sailed together, at least a dozen shadows that fled from one horizon in the northeast southbound until they disappeared into the gnarled tree limbs of the opposite horizon. He craned his neck mechanically and almost autonomously to watch them. Fifteen, maybe sixteen arrowheads streaking methodically down the sky until they disappeared from Chris's view, as quickly and gracefully as they entered.

Another five minutes passed, then ten, then passage of time became incomprehensible. Chris pressed his forehead hard against the steering wheel, forcing himself to swallow a mouthful of saliva. There simply wasn't any feasible way that a home invasion for a single target could take this long. He checked his phone, shut it off, and checked it again. No signal text appeared either time. It felt like an indeterminate amount of eyes were trained on him as he sat, rocking quietly in the driver's seat, though the only life in the area didn't have the mental capacity to care.

All life, that is, except the quiet humming that

welled up from down the road. Chris snapped around to look for the source of the purr, an involuntary jolt, before immediately calming himself and looking down at his phone. He was to pretend he was a lost driver, if someone were to stop. Above all, he couldn't look at any other drivers. If it was the Jamison's, he'd send the warning text. Above all, don't look at them.

The mental checklist rolled down his consciousness steadily, nearly as smoothly as the police car approached. The purr grew louder and deeper, like the threat of a predatory cat in the jungle. Chris didn't look, watching his reflection on the dark phone screen as black and white rode by in his peripheral vision. It never stopped during the painful seconds in which it passed by, but the pain was all the same, as if the car had arrived just for him, to steal him away while his friends pocketed a few hundred dollars.

The car passed. No sirens, no slowing. The house scene before Chris remained entirely undisturbed, not a fragment of a shadow out of place in the lot. It was beginning to make him feel sick. The time he was waiting had surpassed twenty minutes—twenty minutes more than expected—and not a single leaf was disturbed in the Jamison property.

All he was there for was a ride. They'd go to Luciano's Deli exactly like they'd planned and pretend nothing happened. In truth, Chris had already fulfilled most of his bargain. Whatever loyalty to the crime was left

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was anchored in Chris's rapidly diminishing trust and confidence. He tapped a foot quietly on the gas pedal, once again contemplating all his options as he had done so many times before in times of trouble.

"God damnit," he muttered to himself, putting his hands back on the wheel. They didn't need a ride out of there. The woods were thick enough to hide an army, let alone two college kids doing illicit activities. They'd be pissed, no doubt about it: they'd call him out, spit on him, probably refuse to give him his pay, and perhaps even leave him for good. Not that it would matter, in truth, because Chris realized how little connection he really felt with these two.

The sole factor that kept his hand from the ignition was that they were rats. If they were caught, they'd slip up and drag Chris down with them, and no amount of work could clean that smear. His hand moved methodically to the door handle, and as he wrapped his hands around the metal, he looked at his phone one final time. No messages had come.

He didn't want to do this for them, and the money could burn for all he cared at this point. He just had to get himself safely out, and this determination propelled his legs to swing out the car and bring him shambling up the driveway of the Jamison's.

Christopher rounded around the backside of the house avoiding dried leaves and dark twigs that would alert his presence. It was as if he were stepping through

a minefield, cautiously taking each step like it was a life or death situation. He eventually made it over to the base of the window where his friends had crawled through. Around the border of the window most of the paint was chipped, and there was a large raw scratch beneath the glass that his buddies probably made. Chris gazed upon what looked like a gateway to Hell.

He paused to observe his surroundings, and to quickly regain his composure before whispering through the cracked window, "Hey guys. Are you in there? It's time to go now." No one replied as if it were carried off in the gentle fall breeze before creeping in the window. Passing between each and every branch, the noise quickly dispersed into the moderately brisk air. Chris tried one more time in a slightly higher tone to see if that would get their attention. "Enough is enough. Time to get out of here!" Still no one regarded his mouse-like murmurs, and the only noise in the background was the neighbor's leaf blower that occasionally squealed as if something were stuck in it.

Chris was becoming uncomfortable with the situation and was worried about what might have happened to his friends. His body stiffened, and sweat began to run down his back like a canal. Chris was cycling through all of the options he had. He could turn around now, and leave his friends to fend for themselves, or he could further pursue his interest in protecting them.

However, there was no clear-cut answer as all the

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emotions inside of Chris clashed vigorously with each other. Chris was often an unselfish man, but protecting his well-being at the moment seemed like a promising choice.

After a few moments, Chris decided to go in after them. He carefully adjusted the rickety shutters and pushed the creaky window screen aside as he threw his upper body through the slim slit. Using all of his might, he pulled himself up and into the house as smooth as possible. He stood in the parent's room, which had been the primary target within the house. Chris felt a chill run down his spine as the cool breeze continued to flow through the window. He looked around hesitantly only to find that the room had already been invaded by his friends. Several shelves and drawers remained open, and were stripped clean of anything of value. The closets seemed to have been scanned as well, and the door leading to the hallway was left wide open.

The house was silent as if it was sleeping, and Chris remained stationary by the window. He listened for anything in the house that might have reassured him of his friends' presence. The only sounds that penetrated his eardrums were the rustling of the trees, and the slight humming coming from the nearby turnpike. Chris shuffled towards the nearest nightstand, and paused in front of it. He stared and thought about the emptiness of the drawer. Motionless, he entered a subtle trance as if he were staring into his future. Looking with inten-

sity into the vacant drawer that now only contained a simple white sheet that was formerly used to protect its innards.

All of a sudden, a bang echoed throughout the halls followed by loud vibrations that seemed to be shaking the entire house. "They were home", he thought to himself. Chris's heart skipped a beat as the vibrating stopped, and he heard the door swing open followed by a few shouts of laughter. Chris was caught like a deer in the headlights, and the only place that seemed to be safe for now was the closet. The window was too far, and would have made too much noise. He slipped into the closet and slowly closed it in front of him. The closet was filled with many dresses, and shoe-boxes that lined the walls. It had a potent smell of perfume permeating the small closet that seemed to be almost suffocating. This was no place to hide, but this had to do.

While listening to the family scatter around the house like mice, Chris' nerves were high strung, and lead to his body shaking uncontrollably. He tried to put his ear up to one of the slits in the closet, and listen to the family. He faintly heard a conversation or two going on, and was waiting for the right moment to escape. Then he heard a loud screech come from the wife followed by the father yelling to the kids, "I'm calling the police. Someone has robbed us." Chris slowly pushed off the closet and laid his back up against the wall. His

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heart was pounding so loud that if anyone had walked in they might have heard it. The loud thumping of the father ringed through the hallways much like Christmas Carols except these sounds were of extreme discontent and anger. He entered the same room Chris was in and went quickly over to the nightstand. The father banged the stand with his strong fist, and proceeded to yell, "I'm going to get my gun." He began to unpack his semi-automatic pistol while Chris was shivering against the closet wall. The father made his way over to the window to wait for the officials, and the only sound Chris heard was the loud grunting exiting the father's mouth.

Chris peered over to his jean pocket and saw the light on his phone shining through the denim. Ever so carefully, he removed his phone from his pocket trying to avoid the light peering through the closet door as well as not dropping it due to his clumsy, and shaky hands. He had one unread message from Aaron. He slowly swiped across the screen to view what he said.

"Want to meet at Luciano's?"



Jihad Rogers

Steps

George Seyfried '18

There's a phenomenon called scopaeesthesia, a sense that notifies humans when they are being stared at. Scientists and psychologists have yet to fully comprehend why we possess this 'sixth sense', but have widely concluded that it was used frequently in our prehistoric lifestyle. While it may have been useful to our prehistoric ancestors tens of thousands of years ago to sense if a lion or cannibalistic tribe was lurking behind them, as we've evolved, it becomes less useful for people such as myself, solely causing anxiety and humiliation, the notion of wanting to hide under a rock. Right now, this sensation is stronger than ever. I can hear the laughs, too.

A sharp ray of sunlight strikes my eye as I frantically drop the ramp, though I am able to hold on to it. A bead of sweat rolls down my face, and I know it's not from the sun. I fumble with the ramp, failing to gracefully place it onto the sidewalk. Once it's in place, I travel down onto the pavement, shoving it back into the ancient SUV, and slam the door behind me. My mom boisterously waves to me. I don't notice this until the sight of her is blocked by several other cars. I'm no longer familiar with anything in sight.

As a football hits my head, I think about Dr. Hawthorne, my orthopedist. Before a failed surgery when I was ten, he told me to think of home. I was too overcome by anxiety to do this, but four years later, in a much worse predicament, I

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follow his instructions. Unfortunately, home has been a space of havoc and anxiety over the past two months. A place where I wonder if this decision is designed to please either me or my parents.

I declined to go to bed the previous night, my eyes glued to my computer screen, viewing the testimonials about Pedro Arrupe Preparatory School, where I would reluctantly begin high school the next day. I scrutinized the Admissions Video several times.

"I met my closest friends here," a student donned in a football jacket proclaimed to begin the video. I recognized his face; he and his friends hurled eggs at our car in broad daylight.

"I got into MIT thanks to Pedro Arrupe's rigorous curriculum," a voice reminiscent of a teapot on high stuttered. He was wearing a dark tie with some sort of Star Wars design, and his thick glasses were slanted. He appeared to be a senior, yet his teeth were covered with brace brackets.

I scarcely recognized the next student: a Cherry Hill native like myself. "We are a Jesuit community. We love each other." He was much easier to recognize on a skateboard with his tattoos exposed than in a blazer. He speaks in a monotone, and stares into the camera with a cheesy grin, though his eyes display gluttony.

"We send Bibles to Either-i-opium."

"The Freshman Hunt doesn't exist at Pedro Arrupe," the football-egg guy chuckled. "Sure, we'll give

them a tough time, maybe untuck their shirt or shove their books onto the ground, but only in the sake of community."

What sort of godly community did I just sign up for? I think to myself.

The video shot to the students all sitting in the football stadium bleachers. "Come to Pedro Arrupe Prep!" they all cried.

The video ended with the students breaking into some kind of dance party. The expression in most of the students faces was one of helpless, vulnerability, and tedium, as if they'd rather be in math class than dragged into this humiliation. I've become an expert at understanding body language, and the expression one of the students' eyes says something unmistakable: save yourself and don't come here. I reminded myself that I'd sue them if they make me dance.

The conclusions that I could make from the video were that the students were not as accepting as the administrators had promised my family, and that these upcoming four years were going to be harrowing.

I stop dead in my tracks after my mom zooms away. I might appear to sit tranquilized in my wheelchair, but I'm frantic. For the first time in my lifetime, I'm utterly on my own. I scan around to look for the wheelchair ramp, but reality strikes me: this building is older than the United States. When this building was built in the 1760s, people like me were left to die.

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The building looks gothic, almost out of a dark Renaissance painting. The roofs are pointy, topped with a cross, almost like several churches connected. It's a sunny August morning, but something looks dark.

I eye a ramp along the side of the building, however grass isolates it from the pavement. My hands push my wheels with as much power as I can possibly use once my wheels touch the grass. I can feel the blisters beginning to take shape; without an aid, I'm desperate. The stares are accumulating, and I hear laughing once I round the building and land on the damp grass on the isolate quad.

"Is he running away?"

"I guess someone's not Prep material!"

I'm alone now, on the quad, trying to catch my breath. It's 7:50, with ten minutes to spare before the bell rings. A pit is growing in my stomach, and I'm starting to sweat. I inadvertently gnaw at my fingernails as my brain tells me to somehow find my way through Philadelphia and search for a way home. The notion of retreating to a familiar place soothes my anxious mind, opposed to entering the masses of kids, many intolerant. I can't concentrate with the fears circling through me. Nevertheless, my heart reminds me of the tears in my parents' eyes when I agreed to go to Pedro Arrupe, embracing each other. I realized that was the first time they understood that I could flourish as if I was ordinary. Do I stick the day out, or do I cower home?

I decide to do what the administrators say they hope to instill in their students: I decide to be selfless. I brace myself, and wheel up the incline. While I've lived in New Jersey my whole life, I've spent more time across the Delaware in Philadelphia. I was born in Philadelphia, every school I attended before college was in Philadelphia, and I've spent hundreds of nights in various Philadelphia hospitals.

When my mother was four months pregnant with me, she went to her doctor for an average checkup. The main purpose was to double check on everything, and in my case, it saved my life. My parents were told that my left leg was deformed, and that I should be born in a hospital in Philadelphia, due to their immense technology, if I were to safely be born. The clinic saw signs that my organs were also developmentally disabled, and that there was a great chance I would not live until my first birthday.

My parents were taught to believe that abortion was a grave sin, nevertheless, after that dreaded appointment, they challenged everything they had ever known. My parents always wanted the best for me, but wanted to prevent any unnecessary suffering. While they knew they would feel guilty knowing that they could have prevented suffering if I were missing valuable organs, they took their chances and went through with the pregnancy.

The first couple days of my life were filled with

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tests. I was immediately separated from my anxious parents, but was returned by my relieved pediatrician when it was discovered that the only thing wrong with me was my left leg.

We take a lot for granted, especially our exceptional bodies, from the trillions of cells that power us, to our exceptional brains that have a higher capacity than we'll ever comprehend, to our immune system that can fight off incredible illnesses. However, I feel that our tenacious bones, essentially made up of powder, are as important. Without our bones, we'd be an immobile puddle of skin, blood, and organs. One missing bone of two hundred and six is life changing, especially when it's a valuable one.

I was born with a deformed fibula in my left leg. The fibula isn't the largest or strongest bone in the leg (that title belongs to the femur), however, it's arguably the most important. Fibulae have been described to me as gateways from the knee to the feet due to their prodigious effect on the legs. The top of the fibula makes up the knee joint, which allows legs to move. The rest stabilizes the knee and tibia so we can walk. If anyone without a fibula stood up, the pressure could destroy valuable bones such as the tibia, knee, and femur, which could damage organs, leading to death.

That's why my left leg was amputated.

Opening a door in a wheelchair is a tedious task, especially when perched on a slanted ramp. I ignore

the pit in my stomach and take a deep breath, glancing at the quad and the beige bricks making up the gothic building. I take a last glimpse of the freedom of the world: the last peek of a sunny August day. I'm about to enter a dark place. I open the door with my left arm, and propel myself forward with my right.

A paper airplane slams right into my face the second I've wheeled into the building. I'm in a hallway, though the flood of kids makes it hard to tell. It seems that everyone's unaware of their surroundings, pushing and shoving to get to homeroom. On several occasions, only one of my wheels is on the ground, and I hang on with all my might.

Falling out of my wheelchair is my biggest fear, and it seems to be the same with anyone in a wheelchair. Even though my right leg is perfect (dubbed a cankle by my brother due to my lack of exercise), I need assistance anytime I get in my wheelchair, or I'll fall over. While this school is a self-proclaimed factory for "Men and Women for Others", the idea of one of these self-centered kids helping me is laughable. In front of me, an upperclassman shoves a freshman's binder to the ground.

I don't need to propel my wheelchair forwards with my arms, as the crowd seems to take me with them. When we would go to the Jersey Shore, my envious eyes would watch as my brother would boogie board. I would go to bed each night wishing to do

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the same one day. Right now, the crowd is the wave, though I am paralyzed with fear.

As soon as the glimpse of an elevator catches my eye over the heads of the energetic crowd, I detour with as much strength as I have, spinning with my right leg. I hear screams, gibes, obscenities, and confused laughs as I make my way to the elevator.

There's a sign near the elevator that proclaims that the elevator is reserved for elderly teachers, or students with "significant injuries or disorders". As I realize I fall into the "significant disorder" class, I enter the elevator. The anarchy of the hallway is drained. I declare that elevators will be my piece of serenity for the rest of the year.

I had been told at orientation that my homeroom is the first door on the right from the elevator. Though special accommodations generally embarrass me as I exit the elevator and am surrounded by the havoc of freshman, I'm thankful for the accommodation.

The classroom is devoid of life when I enter. I'm the only person in the classroom, and notice that unlike previous classrooms, there are no bright inspirational posters about friendship and compassion, no inspirational quotes are written on the chalkboard.

There is a large desk in the back of the classroom without a chair. I wheel over to it, trying to hide my wheelchair. I straighten my tie, and open up my math textbook in hopes to appear like a normal kid.

I'm filled with an abundance of anxiety. I try and think of my vacation to Montreal, as a reward for getting into Pedro Arrupe. I close my eyes and reminisce on devouring vanilla ice cream, chocolate sauce drizzled over it, tucked away in a warm crepe as wheeled down a cobble street, which is a tedious task, though I don't mind a bit. I can already hear the elegant French language, and the rhythmic pattern of horses drawing a carriage alongside me, and visualize kids splashing by a fountain. I can feel the envy in my stomach now, longing to splash in the fountain. My mind turns to returning to America, an officer asking for our keys, being led to the Inspection Center, my wheelchair being scrutinized by dogs and machines, a snappy officer interviewing us.

I try to take the trip off my mind. While Montreal was more than exceptional, at the border station in a small town in upstate New York, where everyone's known as friendly, I learned that there would always be prejudice against me.

A flock of clamorous kids begin to move into the room. Half of them are taking selfies with each other, and the other half is talking about fall sports tryouts. While they are very cordial. To each other, no one glances at me; I'm forgotten, I'm invisible.

A man with a dour expression walks into the room. He's donned in a black robe. "Welcome to Pedro Arrupe, freshmen," he says. His voice is stolid, and he is

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staring at the wall behind me. "I am Fr. Hawkes, and I am your homeroom teacher this year." He is impassive, and I notice he doesn't blink. "You will all come here every day for ten minutes. I will take attendance and lead you in prayer."

I hear a kid snicker. He turns towards his friends as he searches for a grin of acceptance. Fr. Hawkes approaches him, his expression turning from emotionless to sullen. "Please stand up and face the class," Fr. Hawkes orders him, bitterness dripping through the man's voice, the man who has supposedly given up his life to do the work of God. I notice the intimidating shadow of the boy rise up, his friends laughing, a mocking expression on his face. "Faster!" The boy's chair releases an eerie creak as his feet slam against the ground.

"What's your name?" Fr. Hawkes asks. "Preston," the boy replies in a bold manner. "Preston Shriver." Preston exchanges glances with his friends. His has dark, wavy hair, almost covering his left eye, and nearly tops the towering Fr. Hawkes. Preston has a hefty build. He's not very good looking, but I can see a dreamy sparkle in a few girl's eyes.

"I'd like you to explain your obnoxious snicker." Fr. Hawkes demands.

Preston rolls his eyes. He answers with sarcasm dripping through his voice. "Really? Your group prayer sounds stupid. Like, what are we praying for today? Are

we all gonna say a prayer to dead people in some dead language none of us speak? Or are you gonna call us hellbound antichrists, and baby eating-"

Fr. Hawkes immediately cuts Preston off with his stern voice. "Sit back down, Preston. We don't give detentions here at Prep. We give JUGs; Justices under God, and Preston, my friend, you've just earned one. After school, Preston gets a plastic bag and gets to leave when he fills up the bag to the rim with litter."

Preston rolls his eyes.

Fr. Hawkes tilts his head, bewilderment in his somber, beady eyes. "Is that a Flyers tie?"

"Why?" Preston snaps. His eyes dart around the classroom, seeing what his friends think of Fr. Hawkes.

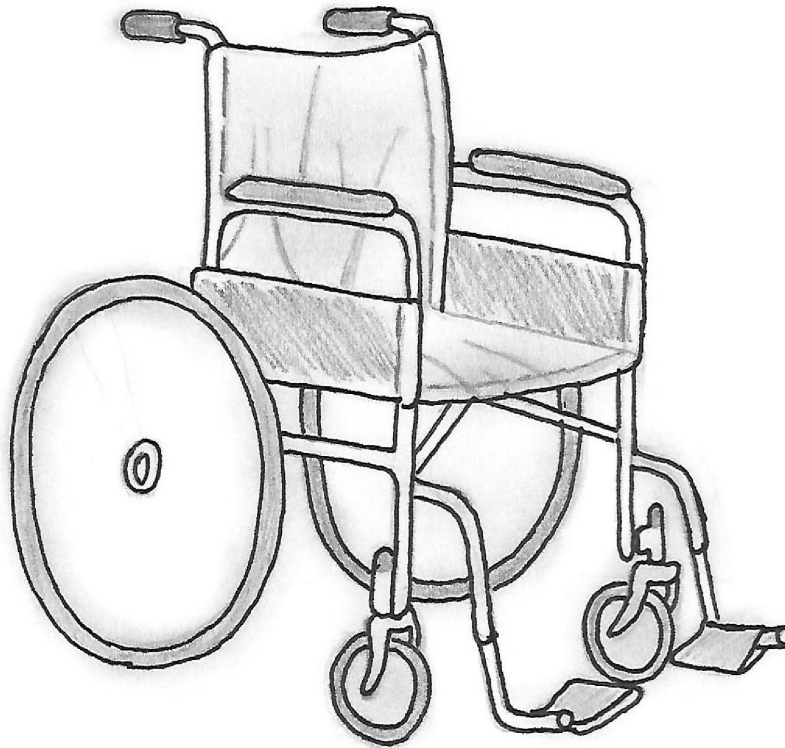
"Don't lie to me boy, is that a damn Flyers tie?"

"Yes?" Preston answers, sarcasm in his tone. His friends, and a few girls, are cracking up.

"I knew it." Fr. Hawkes replies, a smile breaking through his strident face. "I knew it." He begins to meander around the classroom, and plops himself down on top of a vacant desk, adjacent to me. "You see, when we accepted you as students here, we solely looked at numbers. Unfortunately, many of you are coming here for the wrong reasons." He eyes Preston, counting reasons with his bony fingers. "Sports, friends, a girl, bragging rights, and this is unacceptable." Fr. Hawkes' icy stare is in my direction now. "While yes, your essay and entry exam gave us a portrait of you, freshman year is a

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final admission test to see if you're Pedro Arrupe material." His indignant eyes connect with mine. He chuckles. "We have two hundred plus kids in this class. I'd be surprised if in four years, we graduate with a hundred."



R.J. Bellitto

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Essays

Small Victories

Drew Gardella '16

I fish. I fish anywhere, anytime, every chance I get.

It was a crisp October morning. Classes, having been canceled for the better part of that week, presented my father and I with an unprecedented opportunity: Giant North Atlantic Bluefin Tuna were making their yearly migration south from icy Canadian waters, placing them right within striking distance of our twenty-foot center console. We prepped months in advance, rigging tackle and building up the boat with extensive upgrades. And after comprehensive research, fishing reports put us right in the town of Chatham, Massachusetts.

"Go back to New York!" an irritated woman spat as we were parking the truck. We are from Connecticut, but the boat trailer had New York plates on it. Local hostility was not the only force against us. A Northeast wind harshly spiked the sea into towering mountains, making it far too dangerous to launch the boat, let alone fish. So we needed a place to keep the vessel. After scouting out about a half-dozen different marinas and butting heads with some more locals, we finally came across Ryder's Cove. It was almost the perfect place, besides the fact that it was a mile inland from the open ocean. Within that stretch of water between our dock and the Chatham inlet, was a labyrinth of treacherous reefs and sandbars.

Three AM. The storm had just passed, and my father and I were making our way to the marina. And although the rest of the town was dark, the stern lights of fellow fishing vessels blinded us as we walked down the dock. Because this was uncharted territory for us, we decided to follow one of the boats through the harbor. As soon as he realized this, however, the driver hit the throttle and we watched as his running lights slowly faded away. In those few moments, we found ourselves adrift, lost in the cold black. Suddenly, there was a jolt, forcing us to a harsh stop. We ran aground. My father immediately turned off the engine to prevent any more sand from being sucked into the motor. Our boat rested herself on a shoal under less than a foot of water. Two and a half foot waves were jacking up and pounding into us as they came across the sandbar. Seawater was pouring in over the gunnels and the transom. She was certainly going to sink if we didn't jump in and push her off the shoal. We leaped off the port side.

The water had an instant numbing effect on my body, and the current threatened to knock me from my footing. Adrenaline coursed through our veins as we thrust our bodies forward with pure torque. We pushed on that hull with godly strength. And after ten agonizing minutes, she was finally jostled free. Both of us were soaked from the chest down, the bilge was flooded with seawater, and the motor sickly sputtered with uncertainty. For a fleeting moment, I thought we were going to call it quits. But then I

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remembered one important fact: we are Gardellas. And we didn't come all this way just to give up. "To hell with it, we're doing this!" I said, reaching for the hand pump and starting to siphon water out of the bilge. In those moments, the sun bloomed on the horizon, its red glow illuminating a clear passage out of the inlet. We were going fishing.



Jihad Rogers

The Green Sweatshirt

Danny McCarthy '16

On a cold morning in late December, I struggled out of my bed and into my car. Glancing at the temperature, I ran back inside to grab a jacket. As I frantically searched through the closet, no jacket was to be found. Then, a worn out sweatshirt caught my eye. It was one of those sweatshirts that had seen far too many winters, one that was only to be worn around the house. At first glance it was ragged , but that old sweatshirt made me feel at home. It was dark green with white letters square across the chest. As I looked at it, I hesitated for a second because I knew it would attract a lot of attention, but I grabbed it off the hook anyway, and went running for the car.

When I arrived at my regional school, with my old green sweatshirt pulled over my uniform, I began to get the feeling that someone was watching me. Some people gave looks of care, accidentally sprinkled with pity. Some, furtive glances that quickly became awkward upon catching my eye. This continued to happen, but I wasn't sure how my threadbare sweatshirt could possibly have attracted so much attention. Around third period, the moment I had begun to dread finally happened. I made eye contact with one of my friends, but instead of looking away; he came over to talk to me. He hesitated for a moment, reading the white block letters across the front of my sweatshirt, and asked, "Are you actually from

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Sandy Hook”? I told him that I was, and he continued to ask questions like: “Did you know anyone involved?” or “What is it like living there?” As I answered his questions, the conversation opened my eyes to what the rest of the world sees. I didn’t realize this at the time, but to him and many others, the words on my tattered sweatshirt, the name of my hometown had become merely a representation. This was a strange realization for me. In my mind Sandy Hook is a small and beautiful New England town, where most of the residents go to church on Sundays, sandwiches are named after town landmarks, and parents take little league sports far too seriously.

As if waking from a dream that turned into a nightmare, I began to have second thoughts about wearing my worn green sweatshirt. I couldn’t comprehend how something so simple could bring me such heartache. The more I reflected, the more I came to realize that no one will ever look at my small town quite the same as someone who grew up there. Sandy Hook: synonymous with overly competitive backyard football, skipping stones across ponds and creeks, and riding your bike past dark. Sandy Hook: synonymous with news reporters broadcasting broken hearts and terrible tragedy. Sandy Hook: a community that rose to its feet in the face of something so heartbreaking it would drive most people to their knees. As I thought further, I realized what Sandy Hook will now always be for me; a beacon of hope amidst a sea of the darkest evils. A reminder that even though horrible things happen every day, good will always conquer evil. This is an image that our world so desperately needs.

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At that moment I realized that I had a new role to play, and any time I wore my faded green sweatshirt, the rest of the world would know it too. Everything that has happened has changed me for the better. Each day, I will live out what my town has taught me in the last three years: small acts of kindness can brighten the darkest of nights, and most importantly, love always wins.



More than Just a Toy

Niko Lignore '16

My father parks the car and helps me out of his dark green Nissan Pathfinder. As I hold his hand while I cross the street, one can see that this little four year old is on a mission. Finally, we arrive, and as he smiles at me, I know we will find what we are looking for. The automatic door opens and we immediately head to the third aisle from the right. In this aisle is the one thing that holds an unspeakable power over the both of us. This aisle houses the newest Star Wars figures released by Hasbro. While many share experiences of playing catch or learning to ride a bike with their dad, I share none of these. The love my father passed to me was his love of collecting Star Wars action figures and this is how we bond.

I look at the entrance to my basement and see my father's Star Wars collection which is simply breathtaking. As I quickly scan from piece to piece, I realize that he has the original twelve back. The original twelve back were the first twelve Star Wars figures ever released. Only a few hundred of each were made. They are, as a collector would say, extremely rare. Most would argue they are the Mona Lisa of Star Wars figures. Here they are, staring me right in the face. I still to this day don't believe that they are the genuine artifact, but as he has told me on countless occasions, they are. As I stare at his collection of figures ranging from the 1970's to the present day, he stands next to me and looking me in the eye, he asks

me," Do you know why I keep all these toys?" Me, being my eager seven year old self, ask him why. He puts his hand on my shoulder and says, "One day, when I'm not here, all of this will be yours and when you give your figures to your children, you will think of me and how much I love you." We walked off to go watch TV. I play with the new Millennium Falcon and as my little brother chases me with my father's old TIE fighter. In that moment, I knew this will forever be our thing.

My father has countless stories from his childhood about his Star Wars figures and as I grew up, he had even more stories about our collection. One story from his childhood that he tells me speaks to his character trait of persistence. As we sat at the breakfast table eating cereal, he looks up at me and says "you know those stormtroopers we have downstairs." Of course I say yes and he tells me "they were a special set from a cereal box. I went through three boxes just to get the Han Solo." This same Han Solo led both of us on the wildest scavenger hunt we had ever

pursued when I was four. As we ran into the Star Wars aisle in Brian's toys we were looking for one thing, actually a set. The set replicated the Death Star trash compactor scene in episode four, which at the time was my favorite scene. At that store we found part one. It took us another two weeks to find the second part. We found it when we went to Walmart. We were supposed to be looking for "house

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toys. We were both very proud of ourselves for finding part two. Mom wanted to know where was her toilet paper.

We recently have switched to collecting our figures from Hot Toys and now spend countless hours making and revising a core list of "must get" figures. Eventually, this list will encompass all the figures they make. Typically, with these new figures, my father and I take the time to put them in poses and display them. He always tells me I'm "too rough" with the figures. I always find myself telling him to add "more force" when posing. In this sense, we balance each other's strengths and weaknesses. As we both pose our several different figures, we simply exist. Through the whole process of opening the figures, smelling the boxes, reading the instructions and playing with them till our hearts content, we exist together. Regardless of who makes it, we will get it. No, contrary to belief, we are not feeding an obsession, we are just having a simple game of catch. I am a senior in high school and I still play with action figures. Why? Because my father plays with me.



Jihad Rogers

I'm Not Crying, I'm Sweating Through My Eyes

Grant Stone '16

Brimming with the emotional force of compassion, I lay with puffy eyes and a stuffy nose. Sniffles begin to subside as tears cease to stream down my cheeks, and I become cognizant of my surroundings. Muted pink walls enclose me while permitting space for a small desk, an air conditioner and a twin-sized bed, upon which I rest. I wipe my eyes on my sleeve, noting the leftover residue on my shirt with a passing grimace. My friend and fellow retreatant gestures to me from his seat across the room, asking me if I'm alright. I respond with a halfhearted nod. He seems to understand that I had experienced an intimate moment, and he respects the fact that I emoted. Looking back, though, I find this puzzling. I had blubbered like a baby, yet he doesn't judge me in the slightest. How is that right? I thought crying was a sign of weakness. Emotion isn't masculine, is it?

Society has always painted a very specific picture of masculinity. I've observed that men aren't supposed to cry. Men rarely ever emote, and when they do, it's usually an expression of strength in the form of anger, determination, or confidence. These are regarded by most as 'manly' qualities, the feelings that most exemplify the best traits of males. As boys, we are taught to 'man up', 'suck it up', and even 'grow a pair'. Ironi-

cally, within the infinite plethora of emotions humans possess, boys place apathy among the most valuable. This dynamic is at play everywhere; if you get hurt, you don't cry. As a kid, if I fall and gash my knee on the playground, I shake it off, and that's all there is to it. Even the media glorifies the bottling of emotion—television characters are seen making jokes about tears, my personal favorite being, 'I'm not crying, I'm just sweating through my eyes.' The punchline seems ridiculous, but the underlying message sticks with the viewer.

Oftentimes, the decision to withhold emotion is for the very reason of outward appearance. A great example of this process at work is within sports. Let's look to baseball, but more specifically, the hit by pitch. If my teammate gets drilled in the back, his instinct is to suck it up, no matter how badly it hurts. In his mind, why shouldn't he? Catcalls of 'we've got ice' and 'eat it' ring from the dugout steps, and his lack of emotion is reinforced. By taking the pain head on, he magically becomes manlier in the eyes of his peers. As an unfortunate consequence, this cause and effect pops up in other areas of life. One such area is the loss of a loved one. Since society tells a boy that stoicism and apathy are masculine, the boy tries to bottle up grief and sadness for the sake of appearing stronger. This can prove to be a grave mistake, as that trapped emotion can create emotional insecurity that appears in the future.

Emotion is an integral part of human nature, and we can't simply ignore the feelings that may be associated with insecurity or sadness. Nowadays, I see masculinity beginning to re-

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ceive a makeover (for lack of a manlier word). As men we still instinctively suppress feelings, but new concepts are surfacing that describe a revamped kind of manliness. Those who are masculine don't ignore their emotions, but rather are comfortable with and in control of what they feel. This new masculinity preaches that it is perfectly acceptable to emote, because one shouldn't create internal instability based upon outward appearance. Masculinity now encompasses a healthy balance of brawny lumberjack and nurturing caregiver- an adult that has the strength and conviction to take care of business while being sensitive and self-assured emotionally. In my opinion, that's what makes a real man: a strong, authoritative figure who encompasses a keensense of self and emotional maturity.

Sitting on the side of my bed at the retreat center, I racked my brain trying to think of why I just bawled in front of another dude. I must've looked so dumb, with red eyes, a runny nose and tears everywhere. I looked up at my friend, waiting for him to say something derogatory about my display of feelings. I must have violated some sort of 'bro code' with my waterworks. Hesitant, he said nothing, but extended a hand towards me. I grinned from ear to ear, knowing exactly what comes next. I clasped his hand in mine, and he brought me in for a hug. It was quite possibly the manliest thing I've seen to this very day.



Jihad Rogers

