

# The Bellarmine Review

Spring 2022 Volume 82



The Literary Magazine of Fairfield College Preparatory School

*Stories*

*AMDG*

*Poems*

*Magis*

*Essays*

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Spring 2022, Volume 82

We desire to publish poetry and prose that is: clear, concise, and evokes the senses, taking the audience to the writer’s imagined place through strong images, and a good sense of rhythm. It is believed in Jesuit education that an academic endeavor may be an encounter with the divine: *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 lived truth.

## Colophon

The text of this book is composed in Charter, with accented text in italicized Times New Roman. The typeface used for the cover is Perpetua.

The Bellarmine Review  
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# Foreword

The Writing Royale is Fairfield Prep's Creative Writing Contest, which is open to both short stories and personal essays of no more than 1,500 words. This year, we had our highest number of submissions of personal essays and short stories in the three years the contest has run. The faculty moderator of *The Bellarmine Review* wishes to thank the panel of three English teachers who read the submissions anonymously and chose the five finalists.

This year's guest-judge, Sonja Livingston, is the author of five books. Her latest book is *The Virgin of Prince Street*, which explores the changing concepts of devotion and her journey back to the Catholic Church. She is also the author of three essay collections as well as *Ghostbread*, which won the AWP Book Prize for Nonfiction. Livingston's essays appear widely, including in: *Salon*, *LitHub*, *America*, and *The Kenyon Review*. She is an associate professor of English at Virginia Commonwealth University.



Congratulations to this year's winner, Jack Miller, and all the finalists. After reading all the stories, Livingston offered the following words of praise for each student's work:

Jack Miller's "The Smithy of My Years," stands out for the writer's rare ability to observe and convey the intricacies of human nature. The narrator's uncle is both joyous and sorrowful, playful and harsh. Throughout it all, a sense of the uncle comes through and he is clearly important to the narrator, whose descriptions so beautifully capture his character. Descriptions of the old theatre, which "seemed to rot from the outside, with the different coats of arms spread across the building breaking apart," are similarly effective and evocative. This is a writer who notices the world around him, the people in it and is able to bring them to life in this richly complex and haunting portrait.

Jason Gong's "One Action for All," is a riveting story of baseball, action and character. The writer uses telling details and effective descriptions to develop his character, create a believable setting and ratchet up the internal and external tension as the playoff game progresses from an easy win to a potential loss. Because of his talent and influence on the team, the main character, Grady, is under a great deal of pressure to win the game. The story's surprise ending demonstrates the writer's ability to grab readers with a good story and a believable situation while showcasing a character who transforms from an individual on a team to a true team player.

Robbie Donahue's "Toyota Highlander," conveys the eerie silence of a future world inhabited by self-propelled vehicles and people whose lives have become one of bland uniformity and ease. Donahue's main character, Eli, resists the soul-crushing sameness through his attachment to his 30 year-old vehicle, which requires that he still think on his own to drive. Donahue's use of the vehicle as a symbol and his

atmospheric descriptions make the world he's created seem both real and oddly prophetic. The ending is masterful. The story reads as a warning against the temptation of the easy path as it underscores the human desire (and necessity) to be challenged and outspoken instead of meekly following the crowd.

Jack Greenleaf's "The House on the Corner," is a masterful demonstration of setting and voice. The writer brings the gloomy house to life through vivid descriptions such of dark hallways and peeling walls. If the rotting wood and broken windows are not enough to convey the ominous setting, the narrator's description of his father seals the deal: "My father spent his days lurking throughout the home." Every word seems well chosen. Through the writer's skill, the reader understands the decay of the place and of the father-son relationship. Through his strong storytelling voice, we sense the narrator's imprisonment and complicated feelings about his father and the freedom that eludes him even when he finally leaves the old house.

Charlie Wiele's, "The Irresistible Mine," hooks readers from the first line as his character ventures deep into an Appalachian mine in search of a treasure with the power to change his life. His character's determination and desperation come through the skillful use of specific setting details, heightening action and character description as he burrows deeper into the tunnels, seeking gold. The situation the writer describes and the tension he so effectively builds pulls the reader along and does not end until the last line, which comes with a lesson for the character and for readers as well.

# Short Stories

“Most of the basic material a writer works with is acquired before the age of fifteen.”

-- Willa Cather

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## The Smithy of My Years

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Jack Miller '23

I can't believe I'm back here, at Shakespeare Park, where the ghostly theater used to be. Uncle used to take me here as a toddler, walking by my side. His hand in mine, we strolled, sometimes not just walking but skipping.

Memories of Uncle often pervade my thoughts, and when I really think about him, he appears before my mind's eye. He was a tall Irishman, an intimidating fellow with iris eyes. Almost built, but still lanky. The man was a jack of all trades: he could do just about anything from changing the oil of your car to helping you with your calculus homework. Even if he lacked deeper education on certain subjects, he would try his hardest to help you, and sometimes even put research into a topic he didn't fully grasp in order to develop a deeper understanding, just to help me most of the time.

Throughout my days of childhood, Uncle was always there, especially for fonder times. He was the one who taught me how to ride a bike and raced electric toy cars with me on Christmas. On Holidays, as soon as he arrived at my house, he would see me around in the living room and scream, "Tickle Johnny!" and run over to tickle me. Even despite the intimidating features, he held a sort of joy about him. Uncle always took the time to help me or laugh with me. Moreover, he took me on trips with him, sometimes just to the store, other times as far as New York City, telling me stories from his youth there. He would describe stories from Ireland, his homeland, his siblings, and how different life was there. Though, a sort of darkness was deeply embedded beyond those iris eyes of his that would be exposed every so often. Sometimes, Uncle screamed at people when they made forgettable and minuscule mistakes. If someone wasn't doing some task to his liking or failed to do it the way he wanted, well . . . then you better watch out. Uncle would take over every task that you failed to do, making it his own, especially when it came to driving. The man was fierce beyond belief and had to be behind the wheel at all costs or else you wouldn't hear the end of it.



That spirit that writhes in the deepest caverns of all men would come out so easily with Uncle in his voice. In my childhood, this made me fear the man—the fact that he could kill you with his voice. In my heart, I still deeply respected Uncle for scolding me over small mistakes because there was no one else that would. However, as I entered my teenage years, and as uncle aged, I loathed it.

A sort of sickness came to him in those later years. That darkness in those iris eyes took over the fonder memories that my childhood was filled with. Uncle grew silent the more he visited my house, the more the years piled on, ignoring me, and when words came out of his mouth, they were just screams, almost always over nothing. The old uncle faded away, his black hair thinned, and the smile that childhood memories tell tales of died out alongside him. His vision in his right eye even started to give, and the iris seemed to fade away along with words to me, himself forgetting the nickname he once called me. Though, what really affected me was our interactions, especially our last one: during my last few weeks in America, I was sitting in my bedroom looking out the window. The summer weather was taking shape, not a cloud in the sky, only the ocean of blue. Uncle was outside and I could see him, right out the window. I needed to talk to him, for I knew I was leaving soon. I ran out of my room and down the stairs and out of the door to my lawn, where he was standing:

“This is it you know”

“Yes”

“Won’t you come to see me off?”

“...”

“Uncle?”

“Yes...”

“Do you remember what you promised me years ago, that we would go see her again?” “Well, yes, but—”

“But it feels like it was just yesterday when..”

“Are you done?”

“But I just want you to—”

“Please, just leave me”

Uncle knew somewhere deep inside what I was alluding to beyond his promise, beyond what was spoken. I didn’t even bother to say anything else to him, or even bring up the subject of her: the Shakespeare Theater.

As I said, Uncle took me to her often—that old place. She was ghostly when he and I visited—almost like an abandoned insane asylum. Her big gray walls had water damage on them and no windows. It seemed to rot from the outside, with the different coats of arms spread across the building breaking apart, and the giant insignia on the front of the building looking like it lost its soul from the weather damage. The top of the building had a hole in it so large that it probably should have collapsed the structure, yet it still stood—somehow.

In its heyday, though, Shakespeare theater held the greatest of casts with actors and actresses from far and wide. I can’t even begin to imagine the energy that was in the walls of that building sixty years ago when it was fully operational—actors screaming, dancing, laughing, crying. All this while their hearts were beating in their chests on the stage, emotions whirling—nervousness, happiness, pride—anything you could imagine. Seeing the audience, they went and performed their hearts out, night after night. Then, during and after the play they would hear echoes of laughter through comedies, cries through tragedies, and cheers through the histories. Can you imagine what those people on stage felt? What the audience felt? Can you see those emotions and memories and the hearts beating incessantly in what was more recently a rotting, old building?

Well...maybe you don’t have to. Sadly, the summer I left for Ireland some arsonist burned the old theater down in the middle of the night. They watched the already dying theater fade into oblivion and made their escape as quickly as they could; they never found them. That same summer, Uncle died due to an illness that he was suffering from for quite a while. He went peacefully apparently, despite his body scorching from his sickness. It’s madness when I think about that summer now, for three years have passed—three whole years.

That hollow ground where the theater was is now called Shakespeare Park by the town residents in remembrance of that once thriving building. Even more so, the townspeople started a theater group. One year ago, they planned to re-enact *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in a grassy field on the grounds of the old Shakespeare Theater for the date November 20th, 2021. Today's that date; tonight's the show. I'm sitting on a blanket in the grass, with people around me, who smile to see the first play on this ground in sixty years. The dark sky looms over our heads, and stars light the sky, themselves burning billions of miles away.

Puck comes out and gives his final speech...

"So good night unto you all. Give me your hands, if we be friends, And Robin shall restore amends."

He exits.

And minutes later, all of the actors come onto the main stage and bow. Some are crying, some are laughing, others are doing both. This flurry of emotions is mirrored in the crowd: people cheering and standing up and going wild. I just sit here and smile taking it all in. I feel it. I feel what they felt sixty years ago, even if it's a tiny glimpse. The players bow again and start bringing people from the crowd up on stage to dance. Wow. Hermia points to me and runs down. She grabs me. I let her. We run up to the stage and spin 'round and 'round. I feel the lights on my face, and the cold autumn air leaves me; only warmth. She stops to look at me for a moment, and I look out into the crowd. I see where the Shakespeare theater used to be, and right in front of it, appears a dark figure, but who is it? It seems to be...Uncle.

Tears start to form in my eyes when I see him again, as he smiles there in that darkness by the theater, his one good eye of iris color looking at me. Silence, composure, expressionless, but expressive and

vocal and vibrant. "Uncle, I really see you," I shout to him, but no reply; he disappears. And above my head, I see the orange leaves of fall fly with the wind to the dark night sky behind me. But in front, only the labyrinth of the Shakespeare Theater appears, the forge of my journeys, the smithy of my years.



## The Irresistible Mine

Charlie Wiele '23

Gold Mine, a series of interconnected tunnels of potential wealth in the Appalachians, rang endlessly as its intended target carried on. Fragments of pebbles and droplets of water cascade into the man-made tunnels, propped with moss-ridden wood, forging echoes that accompany the droning ring of the phone. One man remains in the tunnel with the hopes of locating the one nugget of gold which will transform his life, catapulting him and his family to a mansion rather than their current lowly abode. He had found one minuscule nugget before, his first time in the mines, and he has been committed to gaining more ever since. The man's disheveled appearance is indicative of the immense time which he has spent, deep within the mines. The man took the only remaining minecart deep into the barren mine, hoping for the impossible, hoping for a jackpot. The phone continues ringing. The man's family is worried. He has not emerged in multiple days from the mine, his supplies are dwindling, and his health is rapidly decaying.

The man had read numerous accounts of the lucky few who had hit the jackpot, and every fiber of his being told him that he was next. The man's bones ached from the endless duress, and there seemed to be no light at the end of the tunnel. The noise of the pickaxe against the cold mine wall elicited pain in the man. His life had not turned out how he had imagined. He lived a simple life. He had a family, but they lived modestly. Years of working at the mine had yielded little for the man, and he grew tired of the minutiae of his life. So, the man decided once and for all that he would take his life into his own calloused hands, plunge himself into the mine with no intention of remittance until he struck it rich, and drastically change life for him and his family. Day one in the mine drew on to no avail. The steady rhythm of the man's tools held a louder volume due to the lack of others in the mine. It was a cold, blistering winter week, and many of the miners thought the week to be too rough to endure, so they bundled up, satisfied, within their homes with their families. The man, however, had an insatiable drive and braved the elements with its inherent dangers. The man recklessly and desperately desired his headlamp to catch a fleck of brightness in the damp and cold darkness. A fleck that would snowball

into a vein of gold, a small fortune. However, the man grew exhausted as the hours drew on, and rather than elevate from the depths of the mine to his loving family, the man set up his camp in the tunnels, an ill-advised tactic for those with a will to live.

The man awoke the next day, blue in his extremities and breathless due to a developing cough. Many miners know that when a cough develops, fatality is a possibility, but the man was blinded by his ambitions and plagued with a necessity for wealth and he ignored his warning signs. Day two was when the phone calls began. An incessant ringing of the phone did nothing but empower the man's drive, as he worked to the rhythm of the phone's ring, taking pauses to divulge a coughing spasm. The work warmed extremities, but frostbite was still imminent, and his cough grew exponentially which was reminiscent of the symptoms of black lung, a cough which overtakes those who brave the mines. The man grew deaf to the phone's tone. The arduous work which he had put himself through combined with the extreme conditions led the man to sensory deprivation. The man had spent over 24 hours in the mine, but his symptoms would allow an onlooker to derive that the man did not have much time left.

The man awakes in a dazed confusion to the sound of a phone ringing. The man is sprawled on the cold, rocky floor of the mine. The man did not remember putting himself to sleep and concluded that he must have lost consciousness. His pickaxe lies next to him. A cool vapor escapes his mouth with every breath and the pickaxe becomes shrouded with frost. With a couple of deep breaths, a congested cry for help from the man's chest escapes into the atmosphere. His cough had progressed immensely. The man got to his feet and took a step towards the deeper, unexplored depths of the tunnel before collapsing to the ground. The man went in and out of consciousness for the next hour. When he finally was able to regain his bearings, the man reached for his axe, but his weakened and emaciated state could not free the axe from its icy prison on the ground. The man knew his time was near, and that giving up on his dream was his only option. He knew help could not get to him as he had taken the lone mine cart, so he knew he must find the inner strength to free himself from the subterranean depths which had consumed him and preyed upon his greed. With a groaning lunge, the man took hold of the ringing phone, saying only a few words. The reassuring words to his family that he was on his way.

The small mining town deep in the heart of the Appalachian Mountain Range gathered around the sprawling mouth of the mine. They heard a screech of metal originating from machinery, working its way up an incline. The cart emerged with an unconscious and slumped body as its only passenger. The man's face was unkempt and covered in dirt and grime, and even in his unconscious state, raspy noises escaped the man's mouth. The town, full of miners, knew this to be the key symptom of black lung. The man's once rosy and friendly facial features now were consumed by an icy blue hue. The town rushed the man to the town doctor, a man familiar with the severe conditions of mining, and the doctor began the man's recovery process.

The man awoke from his deep slumber. He had been sleeping for two days. His family and the doctor surrounded him. A familiar rosiness had returned to the man's face, and his family recognized this reemergence with glee. A respirator tube snaked out of the man's mouth, its clear tubing fogging with each breath. The man is then delivered the awful news. The frost had not retreated without taking a casualty. The man had lost his legs. The leg had been amputated below the knee. A harsh reminder of the mistake that the man had committed. At this moment, the man knows that his burden of an ordinary life has become a life sentence. He will not be able to escape the mundaneness of his life with the sweetness of gold, and as this realization settles in his mind, the man lets out a muffled sob, not one of sadness but one of relief. The greed which had consumed him, disrupting his priorities, had taken a battle but not the war. The man is forced to put his dreams aside, but in doing so, he is able to appreciate the life which he has been given.

## One Action for All

Jason Gong '23

"Lions!" the commentator announces. The crowd's cheers and sounds of early defeat are heard throughout the stands and around the field. It is a beautiful night for a baseball game as the boys of summer go head to head in a playoff matchup. The Wildcats are led by their star player, Grady Homer. Grady, a rebellious player that has much influence on the team, represents someone that people follow and depend on. After hitting a grand slam before the inning ended, his teammates cheered him on as he entered the dugout. Coach Busby calms the team down, telling them to refocus and keep the energy up throughout the game. As they enter the field, Coach Busby pulls Grady to the side telling him, "Look I know we are up by eight runs against the worst team in the league, but it's the playoffs. The game ain't over till it's over, so stay focused and keep communicating with your team." Grady nods his head before he enters the field, taking his usual position at centerfield. As the pitcher throws the first pitch, however, Grady starts to lose focus and dazes off.

As Grady dozes off, he begins to reflect on a memory with his father. They are playing catch in their backyard with his father giving him a lecture about leadership and being a role model for others. "Grady, I know you are on a hot streak right now, hitting home runs left and right, but you can not let that get to your head. You have to keep practicing to get better," said his father. Grady looked away, but he knew his father was right. He might be the best player on the team, but that can easily change if he doesn't practice everyday. Grady begins to think more about what his father said, but suddenly, CRACK! The ball went flying to left field and he ran to go back up his teammate in case the baseball passed him. After the play is over, Grady realizes his team gave up two runs on that hit. After that however, they get the third out, ending the second inning.

As Grady and his teammates return to the dugout, he could hear Coach Busby telling them to stay focused and to add insurance runs to keep their lead. Grady and his teammates are hopeful they can achieve this. However, they did not get anyone on base until the fifth inning and the score is now 8-4. Grady is on deck with a runner on second base and one out. After Coach Busby whispers to the batter to advance

the runner with a bunt, he walks up to Grady and lays out the plan for him. "Hey, if he does not advance the runner to third, I need you to bunt," said Coach Busby. Grady disagrees with him, telling him "Coach, I have driven in 4 runs already. Let me hit the ball!" Coach Busby opposes his idea, but he knows he can not change his decision since he has much influence on the team. Unfortunately, after their discussion, the batter in front of him fails to advance the runner. Grady is now up at home plate and he takes a huge swing at the baseball. "Strike 1," the umpire declares. He looks back at Coach Busby with his eyes glaring at him. Wanting to prove him wrong, Grady steps back into the batter's box and takes another huge swing. CRACK! The ball went flying into the air toward left field, but it is caught by the outfielder. The inning ends with the next batter striking out.

The seventh inning arrives and Grady is back in center field. While he is more focused than before at the start of the game, he dozes off, reflecting on an argument he had with Coach Busby in the past. "Grady, what is wrong with you? You come to practice today, questioning every drill that I give you. You never question me, especially in front of the whole team," said Coach Busby. Grady with a fierce response says, "Coach, your drills are not making any of us better. Other teams are not worried about bunting. They hit the ball." Coach pauses for a second, trying to come up with an answer. "Alright, I may spend a little too much time on bunting, but every team does these drills to get better. Look, there are always going to be important situations where hitting a home run is not going to be the solution to win the game," said Coach Busby. Grady reflected on this memory, but suddenly, CRACK! The ball soars into the air, going 50 feet over the fence. Not only is it just an ordinary home run, but Grady realizes that the Lions just tied the game with a grand slam. The inning ended shortly after with the game tied 8-8.

As Grady and his teammates rush to the dugout, Coach Busby lectures the team with an authoritarian tone. "Guys, I told you. Do not underestimate any team in the playoffs. We have the chance to score right now, but we have to do this as a team," says Coach Busby. The whole team agrees, while Grady pretends to go along. He knows he is the most probable one to score the run and feels he now has to carry the team. Grady's teammates managed to get a base runner on third with one out fortunately. Grady is now up at home plate, ready to hit the baseball as hard and far away as he could. Right before the pitcher

throws the ball, Coach Busby calls a timeout and asks to talk to Grady. The umpire allows him, and Grady walks over to him. Coach Busby whispers to Grady saying, "Look, I know we do not see eye to eye on everything, but I think we both know you are our only hope in winning this game. But notice the infield. They are all playing deep, expecting you to hit the ball far away. A bunt would not be the worst option," says Coach Busby. Grady, annoyed by this response, walks back to home plate without giving any indication that he agrees with him. The pitcher throws the ball and Grady swings through it. "Strike 1," says the umpire. Grady looks back at Coach Busby, seeing his reaction. He did not look happy. Grady steps back into the batter's box, wanting again to prove him wrong and that he can win the game his way. As the pitcher throws the baseball, everything just stops. Grady's mind rushes so fast that everything else seems slow. The memories of his father and Coach Busby begin to flood his mind. Feeling the adrenaline, Grady knows he wants to hit the ball and as the ball reaches the plate, THUD! The crowd looks up in the air for the baseball, but can not seem to find it. They begin to realize that Grady actually bunted. He runs to first base as everybody watches the base runner reach home plate safety. "THE WILDCATS HAVE WON. HOMER WINS THE GAME FOR THE WILDCATS ON A WALK-OFF BUNT!" the commentator declares. As Grady's teammates begin to congratulate him, he sees Coach Busby behind his teammates, smiling at him. They both know he made the right decision not only for himself, but for everyone.



## Toyota Highlander

Robbie Donahue '23

The world is quiet, serene even. The year is 2050 and as Eli drives down the almost silent highway next to the automatic electric cars with no driver, he is put inside somewhat of a strange sense of discomfort. Seeing those cars driverless solely relying on the technology established within them to get the traveler to safety, bugs him. Yes, he knows the artificial intelligence has been proven safe many times, but he can't get the nagging thought that his world, his home for the last 45 years, would turn into a world like some old 90's movie. Eli understands it has been proven that these robots can't act for themselves, but he still can't believe all of these people choose these machines to run their life. He understands people want the easy, lazy way, but haven't they learned anything from those movies? He can't deny the fact that he has thought about switching to the new, comfortable, and easy way, but what has always stopped him, is that feeling of falling into some sort of slavery to these machines: being so addicted, so dependent on these machines that he loses himself in them. And for those reasons, he is still sitting in his passed down car: his 2020 Toyota Highlander.

This thing has been his car forever. He has fixed it countless times and is terrified of the idea of it finally dying. He does know that day is close but doesn't want to even think about it. This car has been with him throughout this entire journey. Been there through all of his ups and downs and whatnot. As he finally exits the highway and starts on his way past the seemingly endless streets, he starts to realize that every block is the same. Each having eery bland houses piled close together, lined with bright green grass lawns and dark concrete driveways.

As he sits there driving past these identical streets, he slowly gets dragged into some sort of lull. However, he quickly realizes this glassy state he is in and returns to the road. He feels that whenever he travels through this world all bland and organic, he sometimes gets sucked into this state where he simply goes through the motions. And that is what scares him most about this new world. While he understands this tech is supposed to make life easier, it almost feels as if this technology is devolving or regressing the human population. People think that this is the next step in our evolution, but he really just thinks that technol-

ogy is allowing the world to become lazy and honestly just spoiled. People never have to do anything themselves anymore; they simply just rely on this technology to do it for them. He knows it is supposed to make things more efficient, but in the end, when this technology becomes even more advanced, the human race won't have to do anything and the machines would run the world for them. Now for some people, that may sound ideal: sitting around all day playing in the metaverse. However, what some don't realize is that with these machines running our society for us, there would be no reason for us to exist.

He rapidly is pulled out of his deep contemplation as he spots the emerald green sign naming the street he just turned on Center Street. As he turns onto his new block he is finally able to drive down one of these long streets he had so often encountered. To no surprise, he finds houses that look exactly like the ones on the ends. He finally pulls into his new jet black driveway and exits his car looking hesitantly at the new house. He walks up the gray concrete steps into his new house. Right as he entered, he bolted up the stairs too scared to look at his new bland house. He opens the door to his new bedroom and immediately falls asleep on my bed.

When he finally wakes up, he realizes he needs food. He stumbles to his car and starts it. Aghhhhhhhh. He tries again. Arhhhh. He tries over and over, but can't seem to get the engine to turn over. All he can think about while pushing the black plastic button is that his car, his beloved car is dead. No. This can't be it. This car has gone through so much he can figure out a way to get it going, he thinks. He tries relentlessly for what feels like an hour as he finally gives up trying.

He slowly walks into his house and sets up the computer. He types into the search bar cars. He has never done this before so he really has no clue how it works. He goes from website to website trying to find a model of his car but to no avail.

He's got to keep looking, right? He can't put a name to it but something, he doesn't know what, is dragging him away from this idea. He's not sure exactly what it is, but it is most definitely there. Maybe it's fear, fear that another one of these cars won't last that long. No, it can't be that. But whatever it is, coerced him into opening that new tab and searching for a brand new car. He tries searching for one of those models where he can still be in control, driving, and finally finds one, a 2034 Honda Civic. He keeps thinking to himself, oh what a relief, but in reality it doesn't seem like it; Again, there is this pull. This factor is

driving him to change that search again, but not back to the old cars, but to the new ones. He knows these cars have caused me discomfort in the past, but can they really be that bad? He slowly starts typing in the box, but quickly thereafter stops himself. He can't force himself to go into this world of seemingly unknown. He can't get past the idea of those old movies. At this point, that's all he can think about. On the other hand, he can't stop thinking about how easy it must be. It must be so easy sitting in these self-driving cars while finishing work or watching movies in the back. He can't stop thinking about all of those people sitting in those cars with no worries on their mind. No reason to have to even pay some sort of attention to what is happening around them. And now, after thinking about it, it honestly puts him in some sort of comfort. While he knows this technology is scary and can lead to all of these problems, he knows that if he uses it, he will finally be carefree. He could have an easy life free of stress. He would be able to play games, talk to more people, and catch up on shows. And while he knows this technology can be harmful, he will make sure it won't be. As he thinks this, he rapidly types in the new car and presses enter.

3 months later

The world is quiet, serene even. The year is 2050 and as Alex drives down the almost silent highway next to the automatic electric cars with no driver, he is put inside somewhat of a strange sense of discomfort. He looks around to all the other driverless cars and recognizes one person. He sees his old college friend Eli mindlessly locked into a video game. It almost seems as if he is trapped, unable to escape. Alex shakes his head knowing that that will never happen to him, as he speeds off in his old 2020 Toyota Highlander.

## The House on the Corner

Jack Greenleaf '23

The house was old, decrepit, and crumbling during the time I lived in it. In constant disarray, it seemed to be decorated only by the stains and debris that adorned the dark hallways and peeling walls. There was no electricity, no amenities other than the sunlight that peeked through the filthy windows and sporadic holes in the roof. The most unusual thing about it was that it was once nice, not lavish nor ornate, but beautiful in its simplicity and efficiency. It could now barely be called a home at all, though I suppose it was the closest thing I had for a long time. I spent most of my days within its darker corners, avoiding the man who now ruled over the property: my father. Drunk with both the power he held over me and vast quantities of alcohol, he lost control of the home in a short period of time. I suppose that many people who walked by the home noticed its condition, but that never caused them to stop. As time passed, I'm sure the rotting wood and broken windows became invisible to the average onlooker. The house continued to sit on the corner, but many liked to believe it wasn't there at all.

Though I never got out, I'm sure my father gained quite the reputation whenever he left. I feared him, not because he was constantly cruel, but because he had the great potential to be. This unpredictability defined most of my life. Frequently, I would find myself without a meal. In rare instances, I would be confined solely to a small room in the basement. I didn't attend school. I didn't know anyone other than my father. I had no experience of the outside other than the brief glimpses I took through the window. Despite all this, I didn't hate him. I didn't love him either. I suppose I should've hated him, despised him even, but he was all I had throughout the early years of my life. Through this relationship, I was able to survive, and there wasn't anything I knew I was missing. This would of course change, but for the time, I accepted my condition. I had no other choice.

My father spent his days lurking throughout the home, often contributing to its slow demise through fits of intermittent rage. He seemed to show no emotion aside from brief flashes of anger. His stare didn't reveal any deeper desires or thoughts, as if he was nothing more than a force of nature confined within a body. He rarely spoke. There

was something almost inhuman about him. I truly don't know why he kept me alive. If I was to die within the house I don't think anyone would've even noticed. As far as I knew, My father was the only one who even knew I existed. I hadn't left the house my entire life. Maybe I had. I couldn't remember. There was only one reason that came to my mind as to why I was still alive: my father felt some need to exercise his power over me. This bizarre philosophy seemed to be the sole reason why he continued to feed me. His policies were very simple; if I ever tried to leave, he would neglect to feed me for however long he saw fit. I never tried to escape. Otherwise, he kept me on a normal schedule, excluding when he was too drunk to remember.

I went on living like this for quite a long time. Too long. I don't know the exact time frame, but I'm certain I lost a large portion of my life to the house. The conclusion of my time in the home was abrupt and of great violence. I remember sulking deep in the darker corners of the home when I heard my father outside, sounding as though he was arguing. Then the shot. I don't know where he got the gun. I knew what happened when the arguing stopped immediately. He stumbled through the door less than a minute later with almost no sense of urgency. I'm sure he knew I was there, but he made no effort to show this. I remember he walked over to the kitchen unconcerned, sitting down and beginning to eat at the decaying table. This went on for about 10 minutes. Then we both heard the sirens, followed by the sharp knock on the door. I did not move, but he got up, with the gun in his pocket to answer it. It was at this very moment that my father, the man who had ruled over me for my entire life, was killed. The official report stated that the suspect reached for his weapon and was neutralized. It didn't matter to me. By the time they had found me, I understood what had happened. They took me away from home that day. I never saw it again.

It's been 5 years. I still don't know how old I am. No one does. No one even knows how I lived as long as I did. I spend my time waiting for a family to take me in. They say I'm a good age for adoption but I know I'm losing my window. Even all these years later, I still don't have any idea how to feel about what happened in that house on the corner. My world was cruel, cold, callous, and harsh, but I had something. On that day I lost the only thing I ever knew. I suppose that does give me the opportunity to be free in the world around me, but I still



feel as though something was taken from me. Not anything beautiful or healthy, but rather a sense of familiarity and structure. Even if it was abysmal, there was some certainty in my life. I don't know what to expect now. I don't know if there is anything left to expect. As the days go on, I constantly find myself looking back to the increasingly distant past. As I continue to lose hope for my future, my thoughts keep drifting back to the house on the corner.

## The Only Part of Kyiv

Inigo Gil '23

The year was 2024. The escalating tensions between NATO and Russia had developed into a full-scale nuclear war. Those who survived the initial invasion of Ukraine scrounged through the remnants of what was once a booming city, hoping to find shelter and food before Russia's next bombing run or even worse, before they starved to death. The Myckev family was one of the many unfortunate families who scavenged as a means of survival. The father and the son, Ivan and Andriy were the ones responsible for finding shelter and food for the family. Shelters were scarce in the wasteland, and only the wealthy families had been able to afford them before Russia's initial invasion. One of them was the Larsson family, who had contacts within the Ukrainian government that had provided them with information about the impending Russian invasion weeks before the war. The Larsson family was able to purchase a nuclear bomb shelter with enough supplies to support their family for several months. They lived in the only part of Kyiv that remained somewhat untouched by the violent wrath of war, Kozyn.

Unfortunately, not all families were offered this commodity, and many were forced to face the scorched wasteland on their own, scavenging for food and water to survive. These "scavengers" relied on small ponds and rivers on the outskirts of Kyiv for water and abandoned homes and other living quarters for food. These scavengers faced several threats throughout their day; specifically, they feared the danger that the American and Russian soldiers brought, as they were known for shooting on sight. Among these scavengers was the Myckev family, a hard-working middle-class family who had failed to find a permanent sustainable shelter before the war. Due to their lack of permanent housing, they had been forced to live a hermit-like lifestyle, moving from place to place, avoiding the many threats that the war had brought to the desolate wasteland of Kyiv.

*Day 325, Food has become even harder to obtain, the water supply is running low, and our chances of survival seem to diminish by the day. Our prayers remain unanswered, and our hopes have been lost in the midst of this war. My wife is growing ever weaker, and my son cannot keep up with our new lifestyle. We have heard rumors from the others of a bomb shelter on the other side of Kyiv, in Kozyn, which is filled with several years worth of food, water, and other basic supplies. Tomorrow we will begin our journey towards Kozyn, and I fear that if these rumors are all but true, this will be the last journey our family will make.*

*Ivan Myckev*

The morning heat seeped through the cloth rags that Ivan had placed over the shagged doorframe. The light forced Ivan's son, Andriy, awake, but he remained on the hay bed he had fashioned the night before, hoping that he could remain in the comfort of his dreams. Anna, Ivan's wife, put together a tossed salad using the remaining greens they had left from their stay at the abandoned farm a few weeks prior. Once ready, the three of them sat around the oil drum which they had fashioned into a table and devoured the small portion of food in front of them. Their hunger had grown stronger as they had been forced to reduce their meals to one portion a day.

Andriy protested, "We have more food, why must we eat only one portion each day?"

Ivan replied, "Understand the times we are living in. The food we have may be the only food we will have access to for days. Save your energy for walking rather than complaining."

Andriy gave his father a demeaning look, hoping that his father would feel guilty and give in to his requests, but his attempt was in vain. Ivan got up and went over to Anna to help get their few belongings ready before they left for Kozyn. They prepared their canisters with water and the remaining rations of food and crawled out of the abandoned toll booth. Ivan pulled out his map of Ukraine and wiped the dust off of it. He ran his finger along the trail that he had chosen to follow, making sure there were no flaws in the plan he had devised. The trip would be a short one, around 50 km, but in these conditions, traveling was no easy task, no matter the distance.

They ventured through the desolate terrain hoping to make it to Kozyn before Russia's next offensive on the Americans, who were situ-

ated only a few miles from their trail. They stopped every six hours to eat and rested for 30 minutes, keeping in schedule with Ivan's plan. Ivan could see that his family was unable to keep up with his fast pace. At the 36 kilometer mark, Ivan approached his son and explained, "I'll give you another ration, but you must promise me you will keep walking"

Andriy solemnly replied, "Can we please stop? My legs hurt too much and you aren't supposed to eat and walk."

Ivan pleaded to Andriy, "You must try your best to keep moving. If you fall behind, your mother will fall behind with you. To her, you are the last hope, you must push on, we are almost there."

Andriy now felt the responsibility of reaching the bomb shelter placed on his shoulders. Andriy loved his mother more than anything, and he refused to be the reason that she didn't make it. This journey had sparked change within Andriy, who being unable to help his weakened mother, had truly realized how powerless he was. With only 16 km left, Ivan, Andriy, and Anna pushed on, fighting hunger and exhaustion to reach their destination. This journey had become a test of their mental strength and their ability to withstand pain. At the last kilometer, Anna collapsed: the exhaustion had overwhelmed her. Andriy ran to his mother and lifted her onto his shoulders, refusing to leave her behind. As they peered down the hill, they saw it—the shelter, covered in ash and rubble, but with the structure still intact.

Andriy exclaimed, "We made it! We're saved!" As he ran to the shelter with his mother in his hands, Ivan chased after him. Andriy laid his mother down beside the iron door and began to pound on the door, begging for help. Shocked by this mysterious arrival, the Larsson family fled to their security room and turned on the camera recording. Immediately Ivan, Anna, and Andriy all popped onto the screen in their worn down, ragged clothes. Hvitserk, the father of the Larsson family, grabbed the microphone and began to interrogate the Myckev family.

"Who are you? What are you doing here? What do you want from us?" asked Hvitserk frantically.

Andriy responded hastily, "We are the Myckev family, we are seeking aid, we have run out of food and water, and my mother has fallen unconscious. We ask you to show kindness, and allow us to enter your shelter so that we may be restored back to good health."

There was a pause, all that Andriy could hear was the feedback from the mic. He felt his breath get heavier as he nervously awaited a

response. A few seconds later, Hvitserk replied, "I cannot allow you in, my only job is to worry about my family and my family only."

Shocked at the inhumanity of this man, Andriy violently responded, "How dare you! We all have Ukrainian blood flowing through us and yet you refuse to help us! We were once neighbors, and now you turn your back on us! My mother is getting weaker by the second, and she requires help. If there is any humanity left in any of you, please let her in."

Hvitserk replied sternly, "We do not trust you scavengers. We have heard stories of your savage ways. We cannot allow you into our home and risk losing our supplies, food, and sense of security. We must take extreme measures to prioritize our own well-being before that of any outsiders, especially during these times. Now you must leave the premises of our home, or I will be forced to take up arms against you." He looked back at his family in the corner, and ensured himself that he was making the right decision.

Andriy, enraged by the negligence of the Larsson family, picked his mother up and placed her on his shoulders. They walked towards a cave, he placed his mother down, and placed his hand on her neck, her pulse was slowly fading. His heart sank as he recognized that it was only a matter of time before Anna perished. He felt powerless and useless, as if his own life had lost all meaning. Andriy woke up the next morning to Ivan's sobbing. He glanced over at his mother, and he could tell by her pale skin that she had passed.

## Moke

Luke Lombardo '23

Growing up I always wondered what had happened to my Dad and Mom. One of my first memories as a child was my Dad and my Mom fighting about God knows what. Growing up my Dad was always in and out of it. Passing out for two minutes then coming back to his senses. I had no idea if he was just tired or if he just needed to take a two-minute nap I just didn't know. I would call these his "naps." My mom never liked it when he took these "naps." But as the years went on they got longer and longer, and these "naps" led my Mom and I to leave. I remember I was 10 years old and asking my mother "Why are you crying? And why are you packing?" She didn't say a word to me and the next thing I knew I was in the back seat of my car with my Mom leaving.

It was a vivid memory, I was sitting in the back seat with my head against the side of the door. My mom was crying a lot, but I was too interested in the highway lights watching them go one by one. That night we slept in the car. It was cold and dark and I had no blankets, only my mom holding me to keep me warm.

So it was me and my Mom for a while. We moved to a poor part of Chicago. My mom really tried her best until she started to take those "naps" just like Dad. Because of this I made myself meals and walked to school every day. I was always on my own. I never figured out how the laundry machine worked, and because of this my clothes weren't the cleanest. And on top of all of that I never really had friends. There were a couple of students who made fun of me for not having a Dad. Then I got made fun of for how I smelled and how my clothes were dirty. It got to a point where my teacher noticed and a couple of people in suits came to my house and took my Mom away.

I didn't realize until I was twelve that both my parents were drug addicts. This drug was called moke and was highly addicting. The drug basically makes the user zone out for two minutes at first then it progressively gets worse. Those two minutes become five then the five become an hour then the hour becomes a day and so on. Until you don't wake up anymore. You eventually become brain dead and die. My mind tells me that maybe they quit and maybe they are clean, but I



know they are not because if they were they would rescue me from the dump of the orphanage I was staying in.

From the ages of twelve to eighteen, I was living in this orphanage called Mercy for the Children. But that name wasn't fitting so I called it HOTM or Home of The Mokes. Mostly everyone was here because their parents were either on moke or died from it. I made some friends quickly and they were Leo and Sebastian. Leo and Sebastian were brothers. Both their parents died when they were very young and have been living at HOTM for over 10 years. I quickly learned that there was no mercy here. There was constant bullying. The younger kids usually got beaten up by the older kids and many of their things were stolen. As I got older it was me Leo and Sebastian doing the same thing. It was this ever-lasting cycle. The older you got the more power you had. The cycle never broke; it was always like this and will continue to be like this. The older kids thought if they had to deal with it the younger kids had to. So by the time Leo, Sebastian, and I were 18 we got kicked out of HOTM. We were excited to leave, but that excitement left us right as we stepped into the cold city of Chicago.

We were all we had, and we stuck together. We all got jobs working minimum wage, and we all lived in the same apartment. Life was good until Leo started taking moke. At first, he got away with it; we never saw him take "naps." He controlled it pretty well until it got to a point where he could not put the moke down, and those "naps" lasted five hours. By then we couldn't stop it. Sebastian and I tried to stop him. We took the moke away from him but he would always find a new way to get it back. One night March 23, 2078, Leo took a "nap" and never woke up again. After that Sebastian went crazy; he couldn't see why Leo would do such a thing. Sebastian and I split ways and from that day forward I promised myself I would never end up like my Dad, Mom, Leo, and Sebastian.

I worked hard to get out of the slums of Chicago. I thought if maybe I could get out of Chicago I could get away from moke and start a new life. And I did. I worked and worked and worked until I moved to Santa Barbara. Here I found the love of my life Willow. Willow was my best friend and my wife. She grew up with her Mom and Dad and came from a wealthy family. She was my dream girl and I had it all. Eventually, we had a child named Rory. Life was good I was finally at rest with myself.

Until Willow and I started to fight. It started off small then it got into big arguments and bigger until I could not take it. I finally snapped. After one night of fighting and crying between me and Willow, I decided to blow off some steam and go for a walk. I just couldn't take it. I needed to get away. On the walk I saw a flickering light and it made me stop and think about my parents. The bright blue light around the open sign kept on flicking and flicking and it caught my eye while walking. I looked over at the store. I stopped. I saw a big advertisement for moke. I stood there across the street, and I didn't know my next step.

# Personal Essays

“Bad personal essays are about the writer. Good personal essays are about all of us.”

-- Brian Doyle

## A Bottle of Wine and a Leg of Prosciutto

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Joe Altieri '22

When you're in a tight dining room, crowded with tables and packed with customers on the move, the most important thing you can do as a food-runner or busser is to maintain a semblance of order. The trick is in making it look like you and your co-workers work systematically, harmoniously, even if all we do is our best to stay out of each other's way, hoping not to drop anything, crash into a customer, or get stuck in the labyrinth of tables and people that we call the hall.

Learning this lesson was harrowing, thrilling, glorious. After a couple of weeks, it became a game. Like all serious games, it was life-or-death fun. Literally. Knives and powerful, dangerous tools were in hand, and potentially lethal foodstuffs. And, there was fire.

My first steps into Brick and Wood Pizzeria as an employee were my first steps into a larger world, in which what I wanted and needed—in which I, myself, was not the center of everything. A world of “quicker,” and “on the double,” and “good job,” —of, “better next time,” and “yes boss.” It was something I had never experienced before, and I couldn't get enough of it.

When Clara and Gio Cavalli, the owners, accepted my application to work at their restaurant, in downtown Fairfield, I was too happy to believe it. Here I was, a kid who was born and reared in Rome, Italy, who moved to the U.S. his freshman year of high school, and my first full-time was going to be in one of the best Italian pizzerias in Connecticut.

My third week at Brick and Wood, Chambie, our mozzarella man, left to enter the CIA (the Culinary Institute of America, not the other CIA). His job was vital: without him, there would be no cheese, no antipasto platters, and no burrata—a fresh mozzarella ball with a creamy, soft interior. Antipasto and Burrata platters alone accounted for a third of all sales. Clara and Gio were in a jam. No cheese, no money.

I don't know what Clara and Gio saw in me. Maybe it was the fact that I was Italian, that we had spoken, in our native tongue, about growing up in Italy, where cooking is the national art and the table is the center of the family. Maybe it was the fact that I had told them of how, for three years, I had been cooking dinner almost every night for my grandfather and cousin, because I was living with them and my

parents were still in Rome. And, maybe, it was desperation, too—but when I looked straight at them, and said, “Put me on it,” neither of them hesitated. In late August, I became the mozzarella boy at Brick and Wood.

In a matter of days, my hours were doubled. By late August, I was averaging 59 hours a week. Wednesday through Sunday, the days on which the restaurant was open, I made cheese in the morning and served platters in the afternoon. When we closed service, I had cleaning duties. The average workday spanned from nine in the morning to eleven-thirty at night, with an hour’s break between three and four. It was hard work.

I developed close friendships with many of my co-workers, and I found myself attached to the job with a passion unlike any other I had ever felt. All that, and the pay increase, made the hard work worth it. Jose taught me mozzarella-making. He was a short, rotund Mexican man, always wearing a wide smile and at the ready with a joke, but very serious about his work. He also didn’t speak a word of English. He taught me the trade with many gestures, misunderstandings, and much, much repetition. In the end, I learned enough Spanish to understand his instructions, and worked until I could make a serviceable product. That was two weeks.

Working in the mozzarella bar was a constant party. I kept myself running on about two red bulls and six espressos every day, and the others did the same. Every other second, someone was yelling out orders. From the pizza station to my left, Gio would caution, “Pizza peel, hot, incoming!” Miguel would go minutes on end without looking up, topping one pizza after the other, and Alex would stretch dough and exclaim with a sigh, “Cigarette. I need a cigarette.”

Alex, the Russian, was the man from whom I learned the most at Brick and Wood. He was without a doubt the hardest working one of the bunch. He built the restaurant, himself, brick by brick. He was the first one on the job, and the last one to leave, and he never complained. His jokes lit the kitchen up, made everything fun. He stood out, quite literally. All the customers in the hall could smell the smoky tang from the wood-oven, the richness of our homemade mozzarella, and the warm punch of pizza that made its way through every corner of the dining area, but only those of us in the kitchen had the privilege of taking in the strong mixture of cigarette-smoke and sweat-laden t-shirts, gone unwashed for who knows how many days. That was Alex.

He would mouth off every-one, Clara and Gio included. He would throw jokes left and right—would also be the first to offer a helping hand, to go out of his way to encourage a co-worker. When I began to build a relationship with Alex, I understood this about him: that his jokes didn’t make fun of everyone, but made fun for everyone.

In the mornings, Alex and I would share music, talk about our lives, and laugh together—all of this happening, mind you, while he was rolling out three-hundred pounds of dough and I was crafting a hundred pounds of mozzarella, and chopping, once I had made a fresh batch, the hundred pounds from the previous day. He was a great friend. In a matter of weeks, we grew so close to each other that even the moments of silence ceased to be awkward, and began to be pleasant.

And it’s a great thing to say about a friend that you can enjoy each other’s company as much in silence as in conversation. At night, when we were open, everything was a mixture of work, laughter, and more work. I would help him when he had twelve pizzas to stretch, and he would help me when I had six orders to make in ten minutes. It was he who taught me that how you get through the day matters just as much as getting through it. He was the example to follow, a man who helped others even when he was busy himself, who could work thirteen hours a day, making others his chief worry, and be content.

Working in the mozzarella bar, I learned also the most important lesson of my lifetime. One can learn things by observing dynamics, thinking, and drawing conclusions, even without direct personal involvement. The learning I speak of, though, came from experience and, as often happens when everything seems to begin the way we like—was a punch straight to the gut. I had found another home at Brick and Wood, but I had overestimated my abilities to deal with time. When I took the job, I had forgotten to calculate that there were only twenty-four hours in a day, and that—at least—some time had to be spent asleep. I simply could not keep working more than forty hours a week, honor my academic and extracurricular commitments, and keep my sanity.

I couldn’t have it all. I spoke with my parents and my advisor at school. They gave me two options: lower my hours, or quit. I thought they didn’t understand. I wouldn’t be any good to Brick and Wood if I could only work sparingly. I also didn’t want to give up that feeling:



coming home late at night, dirty with flour and milk and sweat, smelling like a barn, but able to say I'd done a good day's work. I followed their advice, though, and spoke with Clara and Gio. They let me come to work late on the days I had extracurricular commitments, and gave me one shift off on the weekends, so I could do my homework, and for that I will always be grateful.

I found great success thanks to that arrangement, for a couple of weeks. Whether it would have worked out in the long run, I will never know. On the thirteenth of November, 2021, the restaurant closed. Covid-19 got the best of Brick and Wood. As a farewell gift, Clara and Gio gave me a leg of Prosciutto and a bottle of Brick and Wood's home-made wine. Alex moved to Texas.

On that rainy November night, I lost my job, but the lessons learned and experience gained there—those, I will never lose.

## Kid Rock

Aksel Sather '22

My faith lies in Kid Rock. Judging by the fact that I attend a Jesuit highschool I'm pretty sure that's not the "faith track" I'm supposed to be on. And by also understanding that I'm probably the only one who has ever said those words, I should probably explain myself.

I don't know if you have ever been to Maine in the summertime, but in the hot breeze of every August, Maine develops this special smell. To the best of my knowledge it threads the needle between hot melting pine and the cool Atlantic breeze. I bring myself back to this smell to remember a tradition. Most families take yearly vacations, usually switching up the location to different countries or landmarks around the US. Mine spent those last august days, fighting to still feel like summer, in Acadia National Park. I deeply remember the head rush a deep whiff of Maine air would bring as my flip flops crossed the Sears Cabin threshold. A "Sears" cabin is quite interesting. In the most literal way possible, it is a house ordered from a Sears magazine. And as you can imagine, it's just about as sturdy as you would expect.

In accordance with most people's vacation opinions, the travel was by far my least favorite part. However, in the last summer before my Uncle got sick he chose to drive all the kids up in his brand new van featuring, what he called, a "flat screen tv". It really wasn't that flat, or anything close to the size of a television but putting Steve Martin and Cheaper by the Dozen on any screen was enough for me. As the little screen went black and our tires retired from the hot asphalt to a more comfortable dirt road my Uncle resumed his music. If not for the excitement of the looming arrival I don't think I would have remembered that cheesy song he put on. In most cases I was in agreement with my Uncle about music taste but for some odd reason he loved this one particular Kid Rock song. Feasting your eyes on a picture of Kid Rock is quite an experience if you haven't done so before. He looks as though he is the long lost son of Jesus, Bono, and a Pilgrim. Regardless, my Uncle belted each word with much passion and little grace. The stew of this glorious moment is burned into my mind forever.

Fast forward a few years and it's now October. There is no smell of Maine in my nose and we haven't been to Acadia in a while. We started going to Cape Cod because the beaches were much more manageable for my Uncle and his chemo was just a few towns over. It's one of those winter days that somehow found itself in the fall and I'm sitting in the back of my Dad's sedan. I'm wearing a black suit that we threw together the night before and our lights are blinking in unison with the sea of mourners ahead. My mind keeps bouncing between my unmatched outfit and the words I'm supposed to say to my Aunt and cousins. Distracting my train of thought is a CD spinning an old Grateful Dead album. My dad decides "Truckin" doesn't fit the mood and reaches for the eject button. His car is a little older than most. It has an old setting that falls back on a random FM station any time you eject. As the CD slides out and the static comes through the stereo it is followed by the first few bars of a song. It's Kid Rock. I wonder if any other passengers grasp the significance. Maybe it's just me, sitting in a cold car, wishing I could smell Maine, listening to Kid Rock. By the time the song ends we will probably be at the cemetery. I'm praying the song won't end.

I don't really know how to accept death or deal with the idea of knowing you might never see someone again. I also don't have the slightest idea of where we go after we die. I do have some faith though. Faith in Kid Rock.

## Trading Fours

Aksel Sather '22

In jazz, a song is separated into four-bar intervals. "Trading fours" involves an exchange of instrumental passages between musicians. On either side of you is a new soloist, melody, and a different approach. In under a minute, these intervals are the chance to express yourself. Over the years, my jazz teacher has become more of a philosopher than a musician to me. I still hear his thick Russian accent as he encouraged me to "be aware of spaces in between". In these spaces he taught me first, to listen to what was played before you. Second, to empathize and find the groove of the previous soloist. And last, to be courageous in self expression. As I have progressed as not just a musician, but a person, I realize these lessons apply to more than just the music.

The soft introduction of Paul Simon's "The Boxer" seeps from my grandfather's radio as I wipe the five am crust from my eyes to peer out a slowly thawing window. The space between us is large. I'm young, he's old. He grew up in Cleveland, I grew up on a farm. Still, we would rumble down the snow-lined streets into the heart of Bridgeport each Friday morning. He often offered his recollection of very similar drives in his youth. Instead of traveling to a hockey practice, as I was doing, he was driving into the dark Cleveland night to find his father in a bar and drag him back home. As the frost gives way to a clearer picture of the outside world, the power of resilience to overcome insurmountable odds becomes apparent. As I have learned in jazz, listen to what was played before you. His solo, a tenacious, grandfather's groove. The blood orange sun sets on the Chuska mountains, poking their way up from the deep and water-gouged canyons to reveal a stark Navajo reservation. A young woman not much older than me, our guide, shared the challenges of reservation life and listed off the numerous family members who had died from Covid. As the noonday light shone through the sacred slot canyons, the young woman shared the history of her people and her promising plans to become a hospital technician. As I listened, I felt a deep sadness, imagining her plight, but also an inspiration. The Navajo solo, a dark blues groove, flickering minor notes giving way to melodic strains of hope.

As the final horn sounded and locker room celebration ensued, I struggled profusely to slip on my black jazz attire over the fresh sweat that seeped off my hockey gear. This is the hardest “four” to trade. Finding the groove in the difficult transition between the rock and roll of competition to the mellow artistry of a soon to follow jazz show. The close juxtaposition of these two disparate worlds epitomizes the philosophy of my jazz teacher: the joy and fulfillment that emerges from expressing yourself in a wide range of settings. I have found the notes of my solo. It is a busy, frenetic groove, a culmination of passion and love bearing the marks of those around me.

Wynton Marsalis has described jazz as an “endless road of discovery”. My own road may appear to be measured on the surface by the entries on my activities list. However, it is the spaces between these passions where I have learned the true art of “trading fours”. I have developed the ability to listen, empathize, and understand the importance of self expression rooted in personal responsibility. As I take the next step on to college, I look forward to finding new spaces and relishing the opportunity to trade fours in the classroom, the dorm room, and beyond.

## Keeping a Fire Alive

Hugh Hutchinson '22

I marched through the damp woods, keeping an eye on my campers. I was leading my cabin of ten year old boys through winding trails that paralleled a shimmering lake on a warm July evening. We were going on an overnight, a time for our cabin to camp out for a night at a spot around the lake that our sleep away camp rests on. I made sure to repeatedly check in on them as Jared, my co-counselor, was canoeing out to our campsite with our food. Exclamations of hunger and tiredness filled my ears.

“We are almost there!” I announced to them, meeting them with encouragement despite sharing those feelings myself. The job I found myself in required physical and mental persistence, leaving me to wonder why the fatigue I felt was accompanied by such bliss, the kind that does not last just a moment and sees no beginning nor end.

Once we arrived, one of the biggest parts of my responsibility as being in loco parentis, or in the place of parents, in the middle of the woods with ten hungry kids began. Building a fire presented itself as a daunting task because of the belligerent rain from the night before. I sent the boys off to salvage the driest tinder, kindling, and fuel they could find. We needed a fire to eat. We had received little instruction on how to make a fire during our staff training. As Jared supervised the campers and cut up some vegetables I stared down the fire pit that I would be hunched over for the next few hours. I knew that I had to successfully start the fire, and the soggy sticks I watched my campers bring back would not work with me to do that. I realized that I did not do this for myself, but to fulfill the responsibility I have towards them. I hoped that I could meet their expectations of me. I had no place to set expectations of myself because my responsibility at that moment was to fulfill their needs.

I started to gather some birch bark and small sticks from what they brought back. I rubbed birch bark between my fingers to crumble it into a small flammable ball. I broke a few handfuls of small, wispy sticks into little tussles and layered them on top of and around the vital birch bark. I prepared some sticks about the size of pencils to feed to the flame once my tussles caught. I looked at Jared with a grin, boasting what I had assembled.



“Can you pass me the matches?” I asked. His head tilted slightly and he said perplexedly

“I thought you already took them out.” I had not.

Thirty seconds later I found myself quickly trotting through the trail once again in search of a cabin on their overnight somewhere else on the lake. Mission successful, I returned to our campsite with a box of matches and got right to the fire once more.

Again and again, the fire vanished into smoke, but the famished campers and the steadily darkening sky were not merciful towards my inability to get the soggy wood to light. I persisted, fueled by twenty expecting eyes. I blew on the fire with vigor, taking breaks every so often so that I would not pass out from a lack of oxygen. I blew harder and threw more sticks on and steadily the orange flames grew stable.

The faces of the boys around me were illuminated by the warm flicker of the fire and the bright smiles that spread across their faces at the thought of food. In each one of their expressions, I saw myself, seven years before, at that same place watching my counselor do what I had done. I also saw them in my present self. In seven years, they will take on building the fire as well. Responsibility, that at first seems exhausting, presents itself as a burden even though it is nothing but a blessing. Responsibility provides the opportunity to bring joy out of myself by bringing it out of others. We surround our fire, satisfying our hunger, and I wish I could express the gratitude I had for them.

## The Call of Responsibility

Jimmy Gill '22

Hot, dry, and lightness in the air, sweat dripped down my face as I ran drills. My dad, working inside, hollered through a window, “Can I get some help with the paintings?” With no intention of ever following through with my word, I shot back, “Sure.” Ten minutes turned into twenty, and then into thirty as a feeling of guilt grew inside of me. Succumbing to the guilt, I ended my soccer drills early to head inside and help. When crossing the threshold of my house, the light, dry air shifted to dense and cold. My dad was hanging a painting on the stairs when he saw me walk in. He asked for some help for a second time, but his tone felt different, desperate almost. He was slurring his words and at first I thought he was making fun of me for my slight lisp at the time, but he refused to drop the act. He stepped off the ladder and sat down on the landing of our staircase. When he looked at me, the emotion in his eyes was indescribable. He was despondent, helpless, and scared down to his core, an emotion I had never seen from his stoic nature. My father needed help, but not for hanging the painting. I grabbed the home telephone and called my mom who was out on a run at the time.

Before I could explain the situation, he went completely limp, falling forward, knocking the phone from my hand, and disconnecting the call.

This moment was the first time in my life where I could not ignore a responsibility as I had done not thirty minutes ago. This very moment I had my dad unconsciously rolling down the stairs toward me. I stopped his momentum, but the issue now became what to do. I had my father—his left side completely paralyzed—semi-conscious in my lap, no way to communicate with my mom, just hopelessly sitting there, paralyzed with terror. My mother, being a registered nurse, put the very few pieces given to her together and understood that he had just suffered a stroke, and after 10 deafeningly silent minutes, got the ambulance to the house and rushed him to the hospital.

While he was extremely lucky to make a full recovery, the following months were long and difficult. Having to watch him relearn basic motor skills was extremely difficult, but seeing my father initially look hollow was humbling. Humbling in the sense that one small misstep

would have resulted in an entirely different outcome. This experience shifted something inside me, but at the time I could not figure out what. When back in school, I was able to ask for help easier. I could hold a conversation better and empathize more with people. These subtle changes and experiences continued to occur over my middle school years, until there was one notable instant. It was a rainy gloomy afternoon, and my dad and I were driving home from soccer practice. We were talking about the upcoming game on Sunday when he abruptly pulled off to the side of the road. He got out of the car and threw up into the woods.

“Is everything okay?”

No response.

When getting back into the car, without saying a word, he had expressed everything he needed to. I looked at him and saw that familiar, gut-wrenching hollowness. I immediately called my mom, and he was rushed to the hospital in time for the blood clot to be medically thinned out.

While extremely grateful that both situations resulted in a positive outcome, I am even more grateful for the lesson that it instilled in me. When put into that emotionally charged situation again, I did not hesitate or pause in fear as I did in the time prior. I did not need the time to process what was happening, but rather understand what needed to be done. This emotional maturity was the switch, the lesson, and one that cannot be taught, but only learnt from experience.

## Garden Warfare

Brennan Newcomb '22

I am a master of the most mundane task known to man. For the last 3 years, 4 hours of each of my weekends have been consumed by a losing battle versus a yard, my gloved fingers no match for the desperate, persistent weeds looking for breathing room in the carefully mulched beds of perennials. The final assault always came in the fall, where an onslaught of leaves were airdropped from the wise oak trees lining the lawn, a last effort to restore chaos to the orderly grass and shrubbery. Armed with an assortment of rusty tools seemingly as old as time itself and some wired headphones to keep me company, I fought this battle every weekend from March to December for a reward of \$12.50 per hour.

I had a distaste for the monotony. Bizarrely, I looked forward to the next bee sting, or the countless poison ivy encounters, not for the pain but solely to make my session more interesting. The money was good, but I could make the same anywhere. It was a lonely life, that of a landscaper, fighting back bushes and ferns with nothing but music to keep me company. On the bright side, I had ample time to philosophize, pondering the greatest questions life had to offer. How much homework do I have to do after this? How can 20 minutes feel like an hour? Why do I keep coming back?

Becoming acquainted with the solitude was a battle in itself, combatting the urge to quit, sit on my phone, and fill my mind with the same noise of the outside world. It's not often that one finds themselves truly alone, away from the busyness, the expanding to-do list. The awry annuals (which seemed to succumb to both sunlight and shade) provided the perfect barrier to civilization, giving an opportune and appreciated break. I wasn't always alone, though, as Ford Sr. was always there to check my work.

Coach Bob Ford Sr., retired cross country coach, chess champion, Yale graduate, professional storyteller, hat enthusiast, (the list goes on and on) is lord of the land. I am part of a long legacy, where all of Ford Sr.'s years of coaching have been supplemented by a runner managing his lawn. The highlight of each vocational visit would be the anecdote I got out of him while he confirmed my work was up to par. Whether it be a recount of a legendary game from so many years ago, or a unique

political commentary, or an odd fact I can only assume originated from a Snapple cap, or a life update on some former runner I have never and likely will never meet, I left each conversation with a sense that I just gained rare knowledge and a feeling of common contentment.

I was always questioned on why I continued this war on weeds in vain. Why do you always have to work on the weekends? If you complain so much, why not just quit? I like its ultimate meaninglessness in the grand scheme of things. I like the quiet where I get to truly think about things. I like to hear Ford Sr.'s stories. I like the sense of accomplishment that comes from a crisply mulched flower bed. I like how the yard fights back. I am a master of the most mundane.

## Trains

Henry Keller '22

The train is a funny thing in that I have always viewed it as the great equalizer of man. No one person sits in first-class with priority boarding or drives a luxury car to the exclusive back door entrance. Each sits in a common and shared, though not altogether pleasant, experience: we are all equal on the train.

The early train arrives in Madison "on time" enough that today I might have a shot of getting to school on time. The crisp autumn air and freezing metal bench whispers winter into the ears of those who choose to listen. I wait with the usual crowd of middle-aged workers in their tailored suits and pristine dresses, waiting to escape the quiet seaside to lead stimulating lives in some faraway city for a day. My thoughts are, as always, rudely interrupted by the bellowing train horn, an unwelcome sound to one wanting only sleep. The roaring engine greets me along with the friendly conductor whose name I am yet to learn. Once aboard the train I am met by a familiar warm glow of dim light, it is suddenly much quieter. The rusting metal and peeling seats welcome me like an old friend, reminding me that I am neither the first nor the last.

As the train bids farewell to a sleeping town, I begin to watch, like I always do, creating stories in my head of where people are going and where they have been. The woman next to me is a consultant for a large tech firm in New York, I can tell as she is busily typing away on the newest iPhone, presumably to sort out her newest million-dollar contract. A man sits across from her, a Yale professor who had been up late grading papers of students who would one day write the next great American novel. I can tell by his coffee-stained tweed jacket, and by the fact that he is fast asleep. The engineer's voice rudely interrupts my internal conversation to announce our imminent arrival at New Haven's Union Station. I realize now that I had not taken the time to watch the beautiful shoreline as I so often look forward to doing.

I bid the train goodbye as I walk towards the bustling station that is New Haven. I know I must hurry, but can't help looking at the ornate ceilings and old train time clocks that decorate the walls. I board the train to Fairfield as the doors close behind me and struggle to find a place to sit: this is a much busier ride. The bright red seats and beige



rubber flooring are met by a harsh white light that shocks the eyes into waking up for the day. The seat I find is good enough in that it is in fact a seat, so I plop my bag down, and the train rolls on as if by command. I decide that today, instead of stories, I will look through the window and watch as the towns roll past in a grey blur, at times coming into focus. The first still shot I notice is a church I pass each day, its high white steeple and piercing cross not unlike the chapel at my high school. Yet, this church isn't placed among the tall maple trees, rather it is wedged between the crumbling pawn shop and the neon glow of the tattoo parlor. The blur comes back until I focus again on an old brick building I recognize as Bridgeport Elementary, its painted sign fading from years of neglect. Still, I notice two kids, probably my age, walking up to the doors with what I presume to be the same annoyance I get with the prospect of a full school day. Without realizing it, I slip into stories again. The kid on the right has soccer practice after school and the one on the left will probably go home to study in the robot he is building with spare parts he found lying around. Suddenly, just as before, I am interrupted by the sound of the conductor's voice announcing my stop. I rise, to join men and women in suits again, on the way to trade the intriguing stock they have been eyeing. I step into the world I am used to, and walk through the doors of my high school.

I can't help but wonder what I had done in life to deserve something better than the kids I had seen on the train. I feel as though I had seen them every day. In class, I am asked how I, like the Jesuits who came before me, will use my education to better our world, to set the world on fire. All I can think of is the train, what I thought was the great equalizer.

## Evening in New England

Conor Glynn '22

Lento Rubato. Béla Bartók's demanding, picky orders flash through my mind. I could see the small, frail, Hungarian passionately conducting with his baton, forceful tempo, bending his knees and popping back up, like a dinghy rising and falling in high sea. Allegro, non-Rubato. Switch to a three-quarter time. Thumb to high D. Triplets on high E. Left hand on a low E-Major chord with the second DGB on the left with high B on the right. I repeat the phrase with the same mental coordination and hecticness.

Piano is a ritual, a tradition, a piece of me. I have never been forced to practice or take lessons, yet I continue to do so with genuine passion. PEDAL! I almost forget, as I tap the sustainer pedal. With the mechanics in place, I gently caress C, E# and G, to produce three C-Minor chords in pensive succession. The whole song seems to stop for these three chords. The sustainer pedal draws out and brings the richness through the whole house. Bartók orders a whole measure of rest, squeezing the complete flavor of such a powerful, yet demur chord, beautifully encapsulating such an energetic phrase and setting up a more pensive, reflective one. With the last sound waves from the piano strings filtering through the wood of the frame, the allocated beats on the rest dwindling, I mentally prepare for Bartók's next section.

I play, every day, diligently, for an hour. The crisp, sharp sound produced by my Cable-Nelson puts me at ease from any and every trouble or stress in my life. The warm embrace of my mother best describes the comfort and ease which my piano evokes. Purchased well below market value from a close friend of my piano teacher in 2011, the sale of the instrument came with the stipulation that it must be adopted by someone who will take care of it and play it regularly with passion. I do not take that order lightly.

Three-quarters time, reflective of pattern A, Lento Rubato with more emphasis on the lento, than the rubato. I commence. A crisp high C, followed by a strong, driving left hand C-Major chord shattering the previously tranquil reflective silence. My hands are moving, a beautiful melody which is soft but crisp sounds like the nostalgia for childhood

times or a lost relative, in an air of gratitude for these memories. My mind is silent. It is only half way through the phrase that I came to the epiphany that I get it. It clicked. I understand. My brain shifts into autopilot as my fingers take control, beautifully executing Bartók's masterpiece. The flow moves like a leaf on the water of a babbling brook. Not thrown to and fro, yet carried by the strong, but smooth current, gently helped over small rocks, in pace with the fish gliding downstream. Nature in unison. New connectivity and depth arises from the keys like the advent of spring.

Every pianist knows this moment well, the piece stops being a hulking mass of material, arduously labored over like the muscle of the blacksmith. Wrought iron being scorched then twisted and molded with sweat and the crushing strength of an industrial mallet evolving to a fine artisanal good being whimsically crafted, the light brush strokes on a Florentine fresco. This is a standard affair which always begets a smile at the feat, yet this is different.

As the last note drains to a close, I am filled with an indescribable emotion, unlike the predictable, stale resolve of other tunes, or the canned chord, inevitably an inversion of the blues scale, in jazz pieces. A wave of emotion covers me like a blanket on a cold New England night. The mere idea that I have had the opportunity to interact with such creation overwhelms me with a feeling of completeness. I almost feel Bartók's presence guiding my fingers.

## The Best Versions of Ourselves

Mike Rothberg '22

I've always wondered what it is about people that allow us to excel under pressure. When it comes to golf, pressure can neither be shared nor distributed among teammates, unlike most team sports. I am fully responsible for every shot, win or lose. That's because there is no perfect in golf, it's a mental and emotional battle, nevermind physical. However, no book, magazine, or video can adequately examine the essence of the person--each may handle it differently, but what is it about someone like me that can overcome pressure?

That afternoon, I had excelled under pressure--already 2 of the top players in the club had fallen to me in grueling matches. It was strange being an underdog, yet not an underdog--I qualified tied for the lowest round making me the three seed, and I was the youngest to ever qualify. I had already beaten two extremely solid players with extremely solid reputations in very tight matches. But playing against the two seed, a seasoned champion--that was a whole different story. My semi-final track record was horrible, but all could change with one putt on the fifteenth hole to close out the match. But what if I missed it? I could see, squatted behind my line, a gentle arc from left to right, feel the slippery speed, hear the blood roaring in my ears. Anything could happen in the pouring rain and the hazy green mist. I could visualize the putt clearly, so why was I still shaking? Why was my breath shallowing, my heart racing? Some part of me didn't believe I could do it. My failure still lingered. But I had made hundreds of putts just like that one before. Well, maybe without the best player in the club watching (whom I would have to play next should I make it), it would be easier. But why should I care what anyone thinks? I've been defying the odds all day, all week, all my life. For once, my hard work should be rewarded. Then pressure must be a construct--what if my determination took over? What if, in turn, I gained that unwavering confidence, that unshakable self-esteem? As I walked behind the hole, I knew that all I had to do was hit a good putt like I had been doing all day, there was no controlling the shot after contact. I needed to stay in that indescribable place where nothing could touch me, where I simply existed, experiencing neither pain nor joy, neither frustration nor satisfaction. But it is the place where pressure can't touch me--only the best athletes, the

most focused people, those with the highest self-esteem, the hardest workers can reach that place. We become the best versions of ourselves when we reach it. The fear of failure and peer pressure dissipates, leaving each person entirely whole, entirely unshakable with self-esteem at its highest. It's not just all-time greats like Tom Brady and Tiger Woods that can get there. So can the common man, each individual. When I asked myself if I believed I could make it before, there was only a black void for an answer. But I deserved it, not because I was owed anything. It was simply because I completely accepted victory. I am worthy of winning. My hat soaked from the rain, my feet pressed into the slick grass, I set the putter down. My arms felt heavy, but not violently shaky anymore, my mind quiet, allowing myself to slip into that place where all great athletes go--where pressure could not touch me. Suddenly, I heard the click of the putter on the ball, the line looked perfect.

# Poetry

## A Poor Hand to Be Dealt

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Mark Kolotylo '22

My head high I fled home  
A sky of feathers lead in my wake  
As if those prying defying weights  
Had finally left my case  
I raced and soon reached my street  
Dry sheets strewn lying on the deck  
The front door a crack open  
Hammered in to find slivers of glass  
On the battered kitchen floor  
Shattered gin the base still stored on the window sill  
Fur rug cast to the back  
Ceiling fan off kilter  
Three of the blades all tapered  
Ends shaved made out played like spades  
Two refrigerator heart magnets  
On the floor smashed in  
With hand prints  
Traces Of Madness  
Dark marks on the slashed cabinets  
A full house though it felt abandoned  
Never for my kind

"I turn to poems to find spaces that might enlarge, rather than distill, experience."

-- Mary Szybist

## Nostalgia

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James Callaghan '25

I plug my headphones in and place them on my head  
I press shuffle, and hear the opening beat as  
a million memories rush through my body,  
Recalling a time when there was so much less in my head,  
Only me singing this song as we turned onto my street. The sun was  
shimmering and everyone just let me be.

My head is a kaleidoscope of recollection, and My heart pounds with  
the bass,  
My mouth moves with the lyrics, back when Mom swore by homemade  
remedies,

When I forgot about all my assignments  
When my sister gave up on all the hysterics  
When I was finally free,  
Free to be anything I wanted to be  
In that moment, I could have been the first man on Mars  
The guy hopping from bar to bar,  
I might have been the man on the corner with a jar, or  
The guy on stage, howling with my guitar.  
I could have been many things, but I chose to be me,  
Oh, to be in that moment: not thinking about the past or what is yet to  
come, Rather focusing on the song and what is going on.

But in reality, I am sitting on my bed  
Wondering if this feeling will ever leave my head. Goosebumps run  
down my body, taking in what had once been And then, all at once, the  
song comes to an end.  
A few short moments stretched with  
A myriad of memories;

I miss that time in my life, and  
I wish I could still be the old me,  
But now it is time for the real world  
A rude awakening:  
Real life.

A dull sensation numbs the goosebumps, and I sigh as the next song  
turns on,  
It is a new one from not too long ago,  
No feeling of elation, just

The mundane monotony of the present, and yet I move on.



## Marble

Joe Altieri '22

In the black paths of his night  
 The boy walked without direction,  
 Knowing not he craved the light—  
 His soul set upon his black complexion.  
 He said, "left alone with no direction,"  
 Then, "O Darkness, that you might!—"   
 He cried, "all I ask for is affection  
 In this dark and lonesome night."

He walked and fell and rose and tumbled—  
 The winding path with stone was laden  
 —And on a rock at once he stumbled,  
 That was a grand and marble maiden.

He clung fast stead'ly at her side,  
 The cold touch exciting deep amaze,  
 "Behold," said he, "I've now a bride."  
 Who could not see the vicious gaze.

Such was her form, her pearly hair,  
 Such the curves of her harsh waist,  
 That long the youth she did ensnare,  
 Who spoke of love with foolish haste.  
 He begged, "Cold lips I always taste,  
 Speak to me now, my maiden fair,"—  
 Then, "who knew rock bare and chaste,  
 With silence a heart could rend and tear."

## Golden Age

Conor Lillis '22

Waiting upon the tracks  
 the floodgates open, and a horde of brothers pour into  
 the car. A herd of boys in white all packed in.  
 Confused pedestrians change cars  
 others look and admire, wishing  
 they could go back.  
 We sit down on the train  
 shoulder to shoulder in comfort because  
 the brotherhood has my back.

Strangers look from their porch  
 as dozens of kids sprint by their house.  
 We carry the tradition of a mob  
 and like a wave crashing through the doors,  
 the bombsquad piles into Bennet Rink.  
 Everyone joins in cheer for our brothers, leaving  
 no air left in our lungs.  
 The brotherhood has my back.

Watching in the bleachers,  
 down seven with no hope left.  
 Our President stops anyone from leaving,  
 as we wait until the end.  
 Suddenly, the game is within two.  
 Last second shot goes up,  
 it drops out of the sky, and splashes through the net.  
 The Red Sea of brothers fills the court, hugging anyone in sight.  
 We never say die.  
 The brotherhood has my back.



Trumbull Stadium, season on the line.  
A mysterious fog drifts through the bleachers.  
Hopes are down, cheers are low.  
The score is not in our favor.  
Though, it seemed not to matter, as we  
are happy to be there with our brothers.  
We let our song ring out for Fairfield.  
The brotherhood has my back.

Waiting in the locker room, season opener against a rival.  
I put my helmet on, and we run  
out onto the field.  
I look up at the bombsquad  
All my are brothers there, because  
the brotherhood will forever have my back.

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## Cover Art:

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