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The Lost Childhood

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THE LOST CHILDHOOD

By: Thomas Zinzarella
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*For my parents, the ones who
inspired me.*

The Match

I march quickly to the first tee,
my green golf bag flung over my right shoulder,
as my coach bids me farewell,
like Charon shuttling me across the underworld,
wishing me luck on my adventure ahead.

The wind howls ferociously into my face
which sends shivers down my spine.
The overcast clouds follow me wherever I go.
Legs shaking, I stand nervously behind the tee box and
gaze down the long emerald green fairway.

My golf driver awaits me as I slowly cast it out of my bag.
My name is announced, and I sluggishly tee it up.
Eyes upon eyes are fixated on my lefty swing.
My heartbeat picks up,
my hands quiver as I tighten my grip on the club.

As the club is flung high into the March skyline, my back flares up.
My hips tighten and creek like an old cabin wood door.
My arms all of the sudden speed up.
I panic.
I know I am in trouble.

The Callaway golf ball screams past the first fairway.
Wayward right towards the 18th tee box.
"That ball is in trouble."
As I walk up to the ball,
the shame and laughter from the trees surround me.

The match has been decided.
And my ship is destroyed. I am left at sea.
Stuck in the underworld,
with no ride home.

Leatherhead

For years, its waterproof leather skin
peered over a good night of sleep.
Its glory days have passed.

From backyard New England snow bowl games
to frost frozen tundra's.
It wanted to relive those memories once again.

As the leaves outside turned rust orange,
and the days became shorter,
It called my name even more.

Its battle wounds covered with duct tape.
Yet it still gave that same glow,
And yearned to be tossed around the yard once again.

As I grew older, its scars became unattended.
Beach sand stuck inside the stitches
That lasted from the Civil War's over this pigskin.

Off to college.
No more fall seasons.
Darkness was all it saw.

This grizzly old veteran had seen
its last touchdown.
So long partner.

The Lost Road

On a road thought left behind.

Overgrown with razor sharp thorns.

It's a treacherous walk.

Behind the rundown mill,

Laid a dirt path that tells stories like a museum.

1960s Coca Cola bottles lay restless on the side of the road, untouched.

I imagine, the old mill owner chatting with me.

His trousers raggedy from head to toe, a torn straw hiding his gazing eyes.

His cold white face despised me trespassing.

I eagerly trudge further through the bent knee-high grass.

The deeper I went, the chillier it gets.

A shadowy figure continued to track me around in a maze.

I began to run.

I clumsily stumbled over a tree root and grazed my knee.

As I whipped around, the miller forcefully grabs me by my jacket...

I woke up shivering and sweating,

and stared across my college dorm room to my roommate,

It had all been but a bad dream.

Line taken from Dzvinia Orlowsky's book *Bad Harvest*

The Looper (or whatever you want me to be)

I swerve into the parking lot quickly, jolting my 2013 Hyundai Tucson side to side. Late for another caddie loop; I throw on my pine tree green bib on and hastily fly to the caddie master. “You’re late!” is all I hear as I approach the golf bag room. Well not really, my tee time isn’t for another 30 minutes. I’m banished out to the caddie barn to wait with all the other caddies who are waiting for their loops. Which I don’t hate at all, I mean who does? The caddie barn is a marketplace of knowledge being traded by people of all ages. From stories of past rounds to golf course knowledge to even the golf club gossip. Caddies love the chatter of members too! It all filters its way through the loopers.

Want to know more about stocks and which ones to buy? Come to the caddie barn. Want to hear more about Mr. Johnson’s hole-in-one on the par 13th hole? Come to the caddie barn. Or do you want to hear about the two Presidents that Paul has caddied for before? Come to the caddie barn. If you want to learn about anything in the world, just stop by and stay awhile.

Time always rushes by and my group is next on the tee. Today, I’m carrying for two new members where new stories will be exchanged and passed on. It’s a circle that will constantly carry on. I’m always asked about school and life after looping of course too. Both their first tee shot fly right into the thick U.S. Open type fescue. I quickly grasp both thick bags and rush up the fairway to the members tee shots. I know it may be a long loop today but hey, 250 bucks sounds nice, right?

One of the members Mr. Dunn rips a 5-iron from 180 yards out. When it lands on the green, just five feet from the hole, it makes a big THUD noise. It gently rolls towards the hole and drops into the bottom of the cup for a hole-in-one! It’s a story that will be passed on from caddie barn to caddie barn. From caddie to caddie and from golf club to golf club all around the country. “So, did you hear about Mr. Dunn’s hole in one on the par 3 8th hole at Wannamoisset Country Club?”

Crack of the Bat

It had already been a stressful offseason for Andrew, a freshman catcher and infielder vying for a spot on the varsity high school baseball team this year. He was the youngest of four brothers, all of whom were baseball royalty in their small farming town in Ohio. There was a lot of pressure on Andrew to perform at the same level as all three of his brothers had before. Each had received division one scholarships to some of the best baseball schools in the country; the University of Virginia, Vanderbilt University, and Boston College.

Today was the day for Andrew to shine through and forge his path. The day all of his hard work over the offseason would be recognized by the coaches and he would be rewarded with a spot on the varsity baseball team. The extra hours in the batting cage and time spent at the gym couldn't go unnoticed now.

Baseball tryouts are nothing short of a powder keg waiting to happen. Coaches lurk around the field scanning the talent on the field in search for the roster that would represent the school. CRACK! The sound of fungo's illuminate the ballpark as ground ball after ground ball are hit. In the back of every baseball player's head, there is the idea of a "perfect tryout." The tryout where you don't foul off a ball in batting practice or sail a throw over the infielder's head. It's a mental game just as much as it is a physical game. At the end of the fourth day of tryouts, he had finally gotten the news he had been wishing for since he was 12 years old. He not only made the team but would be the opening day catcher. Phone calls poured in from all of his older brothers who congratulated him on his first step in this four-year journey. Andrew couldn't have been more excited to finally wear the Warrior black and blue Nike uniforms that all of his brothers had worn before him.

Opening day was finally here. On a crisp Saturday afternoon in April, Andrew was behind home plate in his first career high school game, when a ball was shot into the gap in right center field. It was the top of the seventh inning with one out and the tying run was leading off of second base. With the crack of the bat, the runner's only goal was to score. The runner took an aggressive turn around third base and was chugging along. Andrew's good friend Tyrek, the right fielder, raced to the spot where the ball was hit and scooped up the baseball. All in one motion, he fired a bullet that one hopped off the edge of the grass and squarely into his Rawling's maroon and black catcher's mitt.

CRACK! Andrew and the runner collided like two runaway locomotives. He rolled over on his back, with his chest protector aimed to the sky. Andrew felt a shock and a tingle all the way down his right arm. When he gazed down at it, his arm inflated like a balloon and started to turn black and purple. Tears filled his eyes and negative thoughts entered his head. He knew instantly his season was done. A broken arm would sideline and prevent him from doing what he loved most. To play baseball.

Zach knew he had to score. His team was trailing by one run in the top of the seventh inning and he was the last chance for his team to pull off a victory. CRACK! A ball sliced into the right center field gap; Zach's legs pivoted, and he took off. Knowing he wasn't the fastest guy on the team, he didn't think he would get waved around third base to try to score. That changed. Coach Parker, the third base coach, vehemently gave them the green light to take a turn, his arms flailing around like a windmill. When Zach chugged around third, he knew it was going to be a close play at home. BANG! When the dust settled, he saw the ball pop out of the catcher's mitt and trickle towards the dugout. SAFE! Call by the home plate umpire yelled. His dugout cheered loudly but Zach didn't give them any attention. He saw the catcher laying on the

ground desperately calling for help. Zach's happiness turned quickly to sadness; he knew it had come at a cost.

Walking a Thin Line

As I yawn and stretch my body out of my end row seat, I faintly hear on the loudspeaker: “*This is your captain speaking, we will arrive at the gate in five minutes.*” I quickly jolt upright almost knocking my iPad onto the blue carpeted airplane floor. The man next to me was still snoring away in his sleep, a black United blanket nestled around his whole figure. I had slept for only two hours on the 13-hour flight across the Pacific Ocean and yet couldn’t wait to get off this airplane. As I peek out the football sized window, I can already feel the grey smog inhaling into my lungs. The skyscrapers that stretched to heaven through the thick clouds. “*Are all the rumors true?*” My brain thinks. The stories on the internet about China.

60 American students on foreign land; a high school teachers’ worst nightmare. After you deplane the aircraft in a new city or country, there’s always a feeling of nakedness. When my best friend Patrick and I walked through the threshold into these uncharted waters together, it felt as if 1000 eyes were fixated on us. Everybody all around us stopped and stared. We were the main attraction in this metropolis of an airport. Our large group was then herded like sheep into this maze of a line to be processed into this foreign land. This land where red and blonde hair are seen as exotic and everybody wants a piece of it.

As we waited in line, our teachers whispered to us to not doing anything suspicious and to take out our passports. We had heard stories of students abducted out of line and thrown into a room to be interrogated by high authority officials. To a high schooler, it almost seemed like a life or death situation to do such a minimal task. As I scanned the room, armed guards stood at attention. Their uniforms pressed to perfection and commanding every order like robots. Security cameras were all strategically placed to cover the whole area. It didn’t just feel like we were being watched by those around us but from a higher up power. *Big brother is up there*

somewhere some sophomore muttered to me. I shook it off, but I couldn't stop thinking about what he said. As the line dwindled and dwindled, I became more of a nervous wreck. My hands began to sweat, and anxiety started to set in. I thought I had made a big mistake by coming here. I just wanted to get back on the airplane and to get out of this "trap."

The man finally motioned me over slowly with his right hand and murmured something in a different language. I had studied four years of this language but yet I couldn't get anything to come out of my mouth. Not a single word. We learned how to ask for directions or order food, not how to deal with customs agents. I handed my passport over as quickly as I could and stood straight at attention. My eyes peered straight ahead at the blank snow-white wall. A picture of their president hung. The picture's eyes beamed back at me as if I were a criminal and had something to hide. After he glanced over a few times, I thought something was wrong. "*Welcome to Beijing and China*" the man said to me in a somewhat broken English accent. As we walked past the security gate, a McDonalds came into our vision, as well as the aroma of fried dumplings that filled my lungs. I was hooked instantly.



Thomas Zinzarella is a senior at Providence College where he is majoring in Sports Media. Thomas has grown up playing sports his whole life and is an aspiring sports play-by-play broadcaster after college. He has written feature stories in the sports section of *The Cowl* for four years and has worked his last few summers in the prestigious Cape Cod Baseball League.

“Thomas’ words come to life and ignite the story. His style of writing immediately grabs the reader’s attention and curiosity. The audience is enthralled with his prose and will not want to put his book down. Every piece is gripping and extremely enticing.” -Zach Kapstein

"Thomas is a natural-born storyteller, and his writing contains a freshness and originality that can captivate any reader. Through his candid, bold voice and his sharp attention to detail, Thomas balances profound introspection with exciting narrative to create remarkable yet relatable stories. *The Lost Childhood* shines with unmistakable authenticity and vivid artistry, and it is a must-read for all those who have navigated the highs and lows of growing up." -Sydney Cahill