

By Adam

My brother came outside with one last suitcase in his hand. He crammed it into the back of my mom's car with all the others. Then Jon slammed the back of my mom's car shut. Through the tinted glass I could see the soccer ball that we would shoot into our goal on hot summer evenings. Our eyes met when he turned around. Sadness flew straight into me as clear as the mournful sound of Jon's bassoon. My brother hugged me. I pulled him closer. "I'm going to miss you badly," he said.

"I will, too," I managed to squeak out, my voice hoarse. It was already happening: my eyes brimmed. I tried to blink back tears, but they wouldn't stop. Tears started pouring out over my eyes. It reminded me of when I was playing basketball and I fell. Pain throbbed through my arm. Jon came to take me to the hospital. With Jon there, I felt safer, calmer, less scared. It reminded me of when I was in camp and I hadn't gotten a letter for days, and loneliness was starting to haunt me. Jon's letter came and filled me with laughs and warmth and a feel that it was good to have a big brother. I looked up and saw one tear roll down my brother's cheek. He brushed it away, but I remembered it.

My dad appeared from the house, carrying an old picture of my brother close to his chest like it was a billion dollars. My brother's face was fat and round in the picture. Hair was starting to grow in on the top of his head as if it were a flower, sprouting. I looked up at my dad and he was wiping his eyes with the back of his hand. My dad sat down on the hood of the car and studied the picture like a textbook. He couldn't stop looking at it.

"It's time to go," said my dad "Say your goodbyes now." Wearing his Penn hat backwards, Jon walked over to the passenger seat of the car, climbed in, and closed the door. He rolled the window down

and motioned me over. I walked up to the car, not sure what to say or do. He gave me a little punch. This time I didn't mind. "I'll miss you," he said.

"Yeah, me too," I said. As I walked away, he handed me his hat.

The car pulled down the driveway. I knew my childhood with my brother was ending this very moment. My brother opened the sun-roof and waved his hand. I waved back even though he probably couldn't see me. The car made a left and climbed the hill till it was out of sight. I walked to the end of the driveway, to see if I could get a last glimpse of the car.

I knew Jon was moving on. It will only be a matter of time before he has graduated college, and gets married, and has kids.

I stood there for a minute, then slowly made my way back up the driveway. I remembered I was holding Jon's Penn hat and I put it on backwards, just as he always did. I walked into his room and sat on his bed. I squeezed his pillow and looked for any sign that Jon was once there.

I picked up Jon's bassoon and put each piece together, the way Jon taught me. I went over to the chair Jon always sat on when he played, and I played the deep mournful sound I had heard coming from his room so many times.