All I really want to do is tell a story.

I've always been a storyteller at heart. I have this tendency to observe everything that unfolds, be it human or inanimate, through the lens of a narrative structure. With the promise of a tale about to unfold before me today, I grab a copy of *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* and drive to school with the ever-so-hopeful "Tonight, Tonight" rocking the car through fried speakers.

Until the world snaps me cold with a curt jolt as I turn into the parking lot. Flung against a formidable moshpit, the despondent lyrics of "Jellybelly" run through my mind. I stagger around in tatters with my head dragging at the front like an unkempt zombie, entering classrooms with a dazed expression. I could have sworn there was a story I wanted to tell, but I've completely forgotten why I would care about anything.

But as I pull away from the storm and slink to a coffee shop to spend my free periods alone, the tight grip on my mind eases and fog dissipates. I pull out my headphones, settle in, and start a film analysis project on visual storytelling in my favorite movies. Everything clicks back into gear as a newly restored hyperfocus lets me break apart each element that makes well-crafted films so flawlessly enrapturing. The subtle intricacies enhance the story in ways I could elaborate endlessly. I look back at the world with "Porcelina of the Vast Oceans" soothing my senses, and can't help but feel that I've got so much to share, and I'm wasting it away in petty isolation. I'm ready to return into the slipstream and get things right this time.

But then the all-too-familiar circus of people causes me to forget just what it was— what anything was. I'm moving automatically again. The frustrated cacophony of "Bodies" reminds

me how powerless I am in every strayed endeavor. I'm just scraping my knees again, foolishly slithering around a clean utopia with childish delusions of a cataclysm.

Yet again, the storm around me eventually fades away, leading me to an empty stage, holding a user manual on how to light it up by conveying a story. The self-pity of "Thirty Three" segues to the eternal optimistic nihilistic bliss of "1979" as I leave my body behind, giving way to a goofy and unrestrained kid in a bike helmet and cape, garnished with a sock puppet and the gift of fantasy. That's right, me— the anxious introvert who's isolated himself all day— at last in my element and working with my cast to direct our energy into perfecting this story for the world to see. Me, afraid to show my emotions to unobserving students, but completely fearless to go big or go home in front of a massive audience. To make hundreds of people laugh at once; to send out a light that reaches countless strangers and friends alike— that's enough to satisfy the day.

Finally home once more, "Farewell and Goodnight" heralds the day's bittersweet departure. The heightened energy from the show starts to fade and I think back on the darkness behind me. It's hard to say how I wrote off my strengths and painted myself in the negatives alone. But in reflection, I translate every sting that zapped my body earlier into a sequence of words that rolls off the page so eloquently, appreciating that darkness as an essential ground for the positivity to stand on. None of it was a waste.

Altogether, I know it wasn't a perfect day. I know tomorrow may not be one either. But for now I know who I am and I know what the world is— and I have done what I can with what I know. It wasn't exactly the story I wanted to tell, but it's more than enough. It's a story, and I've told it.