**“LOUDER THAN A BOMB”**

**Cody by Nova**

My youngest brother was born with my grandfather’s nose, round like spools of thread. My father’s eyes and my mother’s genes. He is 12 years old now, and I watch him play Hungry Hungry Hippos. See, his body jitters like a widd-up toy, and he screams like a happy crow when he asks me to play with him. He tries to learn the words to Scooby Doo Song. Repeats the phrase my mother and I say. And when I see him, I wonder. “How could God know that diabetes peels 27 years off like dead skin?” Yet he still allows my brother to have his fingers pricked everyday . Why is it when I look at him, I can see every needle we’ve ever had to stick his arms, legs, or stomach with to keep him alive? Sometimes 5 shots a day isn’t enough to fight Juvenile Diabetes. I think, “How could God bless him with seizures and autism, “why every time we rush him to the hospital.” It could be my last day watching him rewind on demand until his lips can curve to form words that aren’t even hers?” Because my mother gave him a broken X-chromosome. Today I will smile as he learns to brush his teeth for the first time or obsessed over his red pants and shirts. I will laugh as he tries to learn sign language to make up for tongue lost in fragile “X” syndrome, and I will accept his fake kisses like disorders. But I can’t help the wonder. Can his brain still hold the time I messed up his food when he was 8 or changed his diaper at 7? Will he miss me when I’m not there to run my fingers through his hair like pink oil when he wakes up from ear tube surgeries or seizures. Will he remember how he slept in my bred every night after Mama left, and I held him like an extra pillow or when my arms were his restraints when Daddy said, “put him in the middle without seatbelt, so he would be the first to die in car accidents” Can he know how he found mother in big sister? For now, I will pray for him every night that his kidneys will stop trying to fail on us, that his blood sugar won’t send him into a coma. I hope that he won’t grow accustomed to not pronouncing my name when I go away to college, and I pray. I pray that his seizures won’t kill him before his diabetes does.

**Letter to My Unborn Nephew by Nate**

As I put pen into page, you haven’t yet been birth into this world. And there are things that you don’t understand. I will teach you to rough-house with ideas, wrestle with thoughts like we will until we break living room furniture. I want you to be the M.C. you want to be if you want to be one. See, son, cause’ you need to know that the most hip hop thing you can do is not to be afraid about being un-hip-hop. Question convention. Break bad rules. Make good rules. Know the difference. This is my world. For the day when girls get your attention, remember- Respect is sexy. Ambition, an aphrodisiac. Trust me. Cause’ I’m- a teach you all that and more, make you a man any mother could love… or hate… but always respect. So, chill. Bassinet and bibbed up, cribbed up, watch your uncle get down on stage, and we’ll kick it, like you did in your mother’s womb.

**Maxwell Street – Adam**

This is the poem the blood in my hands has been waiting to write since my last Yiddish-speaking grandparents died. My dad saw when he was too little to see above a deli stand, his dad would take quarters. From that day’s earnings and let him make his way through the stampede of brown-eyes brownie in motion that was Jewish Maxwell Street. He’d lift his arms to the visible vendor. The quarter would transform into a hot dog- no ketchup. But now my dad’s people are receding north as fast as his hairline. Maxwell Street became Rogers Park. Rogers Park became Devon, became Arthur, became North Shore, became “The North Shore”. And it seems to me that this is the way we Jews have lived- always leaving our homes, wandering through the world as if through desserts crossing from one place to another. Even for all the pesach prattle about the “Glory of Freedom,” Jews are still among these who cross the street from a dark face, apparently honoring our ancestors who escaped from Africans by walking the length of a sea. And while my grandma struggled as a n immigrant, I think she, at least, was free- a Jew who understood that in America, being a Jewish is not as hard as being black- that the two don’t even compare, that the bible goes so far back that that don’t even really have slavery in common- just Maxwell Street. And, even if I never called my Grandma Bubby, I want to write this poem in the spirit of remembrance. When I was on the Skomar soccer team, I was the only Jew. The kids asked me if I picked pennies from the ground, teased me about going to hell, and I only wondered where all the Jews who were supposed to be in Skokie actually were. From Egypt to Israel. From Israel to Russia. From Russia to New York to Maxwell Street to Devon to Skokie. To wherever the hair on my dad’s head will go by the time he is buried in the soil from the Mount of Olives. I hope for these Hebrews who can’t seem to stay in one place an exodus only from the same mistakes. And Grandma, who never hated anyone, unless they hated someone for no reason, you were Maxwell Street. Your heart, a place that anyone could call home. Where crossing the street meant saying, “Hello. Madh Habbah.” Or Evanston chanting, “Steinmetz!” Or doing anything that brought to closer to someone else. And all I wanted to ask you before you died was how I could find God as clearly as you did, do that I could be a prophet and bring your love to the chosen people, deemed such by their meeting your standard of having a heartbeat.

**Freaky**

Kids depend on basketball courts to open doors, hoping to shoot their way from broken concrete to hardwood floors. And rappers try, using their flapping jaws to carry’em out the ghetto, making demos, praying the dreams- they skip, skip, skip like memories on a scratched CD, but still inside, they see… That the closest ones to success are in the entertainment industry.

**Counting Graves**

10-9-8. 7 year old boy put 6 feet deep 7.6. In the 5 – foot coffin 5. Wondering what for 4,4. While 3 grown men,3. Have to’ to drive by, 2. And he dodged a couple of bullets but… Room as bright as the box little brother sleeps in. Sleeps in. Big brother feeling like a magician cuddled up in the corner with Mary Jane ‘cause, like Mama and little brother, he already made Jack Daniels disappear. And as tears trickle down face- face- eyes and – blood – eyes and- veins and eyes blood shot red, heart pounds like beating drums in Africa. Being a provider was his only mistake. Jess, counting graves to go to sleep because counting sheep stopped working since he decided to not breathe. Keep telling myself it’s not my fault, but as my conscience decides to talk, I really don’t know anymore. You see, my pain bursts through my soul like an open sore, and I can’t escape my thoughts, because there’s no more open doors. This pitch- black chamber, as dark as a vexed soul. Only vivid images pop in and out of existence – like quantum physics. Big brother, where are you? I can’t see. I can’t—[breathes deeply] I’m hot. My bed is now a 5- foot box, and I’m not comfortable in it. Mama said you shouldn’t leave me alone for more than 5 minutes. But I only left you alone for 6 minutes. Maybe if I came right back, you would still be living. Boy, all you had to do way look after my second progency. Honestly, how hard is it to be my eyes for me? Quit doubting me! It’s not my fault. They thought it was me. You see - - You see that Makaveli Fitch you didn’t want me to wear? I took it, along with your Chicago Bulls jacket. You had it that night when you were selling sugar packets. Hustling a sugarlike substance in the form of pot and rocks on a block run by three hustlers who didn’t like him, decided that the only way to get their commission was to put him out his so they drove by us all. One guy sitting on the steps wearing big brothers clothes. Gun out—pull the trigger six times… Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!... turn like mama in her grave. So, you telling me in my dreams I can hardly conceive nightmares haunting me when I’m the deceased? A mothers worst fear, and you made it come true. I said watch after little, not be a damn fool. My baby was only in second grade, gunned down,’ cause you wanted to be a street slave. You should have been there to keep little brother safe! Haunted by the voices of the deceased, he can’t… Speak! They, brother can I wear your shirt? No. No. No. No. I promise to take good care of it, man. While your mom’s away, keep an eye on your little brother. You understand? What do you think I should offer for me to wear it, huh . That should be you in front that gun. 10… Picks up the gun…9… Contemplates… 8.. The number of weeks since little brother was buried. After all, he was only … 7 year old boy put 6 feet deep.7.6. In the 5 foot coffin. 5. Wondering what for 4.4. While 3 grown men. 3. Have to—to drive by. 2. And he dodged a couple of bullets but… I’m sick and tired of these three things haunting me. Mama’s voice. His grave. My gun. Click, click! Boom!

**By Adam**

They love him. He’s a superstar. Everybody’s got something to say about poetry, because rhymes peak in meaning shedding light on our unspeakables. For an ample example, take the other day when I sat not knowing how to write a poem assuming I was fruitlessly booming the thin air I yelled and spat my frustration – “How do I start? “And my dog looks up from her water dish and says, “I hate to encroach on your artistic space, “cause I know you’re, like, ‘in the zone,’ or whatever, but if you really want my advice, here it is.” And then my dog says, “Poet, breathe now.’ Because it’s the last thing you’ll ever do for yourself. “Poet, breathe now because there’s a fire inside you’ that needs oxygen to burn. “And if you don’t run out of breath,” you’re gonna run out of time.” Poet, breathe now because once the spot gets packed, you got to save that air for screaming. “Your inhalation takes saviorisms to sky highs. “You got to go with the flowin’ of your own voice. Poet, breathe now “because once you spit, you won’t even need air.” You’ll be rocking rhymes, respiratory. “You’ll breathe poetry, baby.” You breathe now, and you’ll never forget that breath. “You got pulsasive passages passing the mike’ and hot hallelujahs when verses you write. “And your savior. Your song is your life.” And your words are like wonders to wondering fifes. “Piping ceremony.” Poets, you man. Words, you wife. “And your honeymoon orbits around your love” like metronomic metres “keeping time to the heartbeat of your heavenly drums.” Poet, breath now because you might have something to say “because peace might depend on your piece because you breathe.” And that air might help your brain tell your heart “to keep pumping one more cycle.” And that blood might help form one last word “that hits the audience hard” because we are all made from the same elements “and we all breathe the same air. “ So celebrate our mutual recipes of existence” by persisting to stay alive “ducking sageless, luckless ages like hippies.” When you take a breath, “the universe rings out like circular beats landing planets.” Our seraphim storms, our spit, stars, our soul candles, “and you breathe like chest rebounds.” Even when all hope seems lost, our sounds pound mikes “like hope stars like, “We are still here, hallas ! “ We make angels of our night clubs, “bards of our bums, outlooks of our outcasts,” and infinity our sums. We are the children of empathy, the pathos of slums. “We heal like helios, like cylical drums.” We enlist life from listless “and sometimes even get things done.” Poet, breathe now because once you start your piece, “you can de behind that microphone. And death may be breathless, but poetry’s deathless. “ So, breathe, be our savior eternal. Amen! Poets, breathe once with me now. Whoo! That’s one poem we all wrote.