

Sweeney's

by [Brian Doyle](#) in the [April 13, 2016](#) issue

Hauled an old longsleeved cotton shirt out of the drawer
Yesterday and once again time ground gears and shifted
Back forty years and this very shirt which was then more
Shirt than holes is handed to me by my lean gruff almost
Always quiet tall older brother who is of course my hero
And I gape at him unbelievably and say Really, for *me*?
And he nods and so I come into possession of his college
Shirt earned playing football for a tavern or something as
Quotidian as that but not for me, not at all for me—that's
The point. Whatever we think is quotidian isn't. The pub
Was called Sweeney's. It closed long ago. I would not be
Surprised if this was the last Sweeney's shirt in existence.
I'll always have his shirt in a drawer. If I touch it, here he
Is in the room with me, smiling at how a shirt can make a
Kid speechless with astonished joy, even forty years later.
Isn't that amazing? We hardly ever say how amazing it is
That you can freeze time and reverse it and make it caper
And spin it back to anywhere anyone you used to be. Isn't
That amazing? A snatch of song, a scent, a battered collar,
A ratty old pub jersey. So many time machines. Yes, time
Wins. My brother withered and vanished. Yet here he sits
On the edge of the bed snickering at me as the shirt hangs
Way down past my knees. No religion owns resurrections.