

‘Like brothers:’ Combat vets find friendship, purpose at OCC

Iraq War vets Mike Webster and Brian Baumgartner are regulars in the Makerspace where they benefit others by bringing a lifetime of knowledge learned in and out of the service.

Kate Bent, Editor in Chief

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OCC students Brian Baumgartner (left) and Mike Webster (right) operate a tablesaw in the Makerspace on April 27. The pair met in fall 2021 at OCC and bonded over both being combat veterans. They are now regular fixtures in the Makerspace where they often help other students complete their projects.

Photo by Kate Bent

On the surface, Orange Coast College students Mike Webster and Brian Baumgartner are oil and water. Baumgartner is analytical, data driven and delivers everything with a deadpan accuracy that would be off-putting if it weren't for his wicked sense of humor and his giant heart. Webster is an ideas man with a frenetic energy and inability to sit still that seems to be cocaine-driven, but isn't.

"He's naturally very twitchy," Baumgartner said of Webster. "Some people first meeting him start to think maybe it's drugs, but it's more than he just needs to be in motion doing something. People ask me about him a lot. I can only say 'yeah, that's just the way he is.' It's just he needs to be doing things."

Somehow together, they seem to make the perfect pair.

"He's not exactly the full opposite of me," Webster said about Baumgartner. "I'm quirky with frickin' 18 things on my mind, but I'm task oriented. How are we gonna get this done the best? Brian's detail oriented and a planner – kind of sometimes over plans. But at the end of the day, we get it done. It works very well."

When they met in the Computer Numerically Controlled Machining class in fall 2021, Webster and Baumgartner initially bonded over their shared military service. Both served in the Iraq War, with Webster first deploying in 2005 and Baumgartner in 2008.

Webster said that he enlisted in the Marines on Sept. 10, 2001 because of his patriotism and his grandfather who had served in the Korean War. The following day's events terrified his family that he would be sent off to war, which ultimately came to pass when he arrived in Fallujah four years later. Webster went on to serve several tours in Iraq as a tank mechanic.

Baumgartner said that he joined the Army because he sees his role in society as that of a protector of others.

"I felt that I had an obligation to at least try again to see if I could get into the military, and try to apply myself in a way that I can increase personal safety and security for people that straight up don't have options," Baumgartner said.

Baumgartner worked as a combat engineer dealing with explosives and spent a lot of his deployment clearing routes of improvised explosive devices.

Both said that their experiences in combat have given them a dark sense of humor, and there are very few limits on what they can joke about.

“That's the best part of our friendship because we don't have the whole filter thing,” Webster said. “We don't get offended by 99.99% of the things that we could say to each other.”

Baumgartner's humor is dry and sardonic, while very few of Webster's jokes are appropriate to put in a news story.

“Last week, I took an exam and he asked how the exam went. I said I bombed it harder than Dresden. I thought that Nagasaki was too easy,” Baumgartner said, referring to two historically significant bombings during World War II.

During their time at OCC, Webster and Baumgartner have not only found a sense of community in each other, but in the Makerspace, which allows students to use woodworking, embroidery and 3D printing machines to complete both personal and school projects.

“I'm in there all the time,” Webster said. “It's like a second home.”

Makerspace professional expert Garret Hill said both Webster and Baumgartner have brought a wealth of knowledge that has benefited everyone who uses the facility.

Hill said that Webster has been instrumental in helping to repair broken machines in the shop.

“Mike worked as a mechanic for tanks,” Hill said. “He has definitely a mechanically inclined mindset where he knows how to build, he can take anything apart and rebuild it.”

Baumgartner brings his own skill set in to assist other students with their projects, Hill said.

“Brian, for one, has an incredible knowledge base of woodworking, everything to do with woodworking,” Hill said. “I've even had students come to me that want to build a certain project and it requires certain woodworking techniques. I'll just toss the question to Brian, and he immediately is able to just answer it.”

Hill said their time in the service has informed how they operate within the space.

"I think the military experience also helps along with that level of integrity and professionalism, because that's probably the number one thing you learn when you're in the military, levels of respect towards people and the things around you in your environment," Hill said.

Baumgartner said he has enjoyed being educated by the other students.

"It's a place where I can interact with some interesting people, especially some of the older people who use it, as well as Garret, where I can learn about things that are not inside my repertoire, conventionally," Baumgartner said. "I can get quick information on that or detailed information by someone that actually knows."

Baumgartner and Webster said that they both want to learn skills acquired in the Makerspace and at OCC in future careers. Baumgartner hopes to work for a composites company with aerospace or defense applications after he finishes degrees in history, tooling, manual machining and Computer Numerically Controlled machine operations this semester. Webster said that he would like to start a construction company with his brother that would employ disabled veterans.

No matter where life takes them, their friendship will be a cornerstone of Baumgartner and Webster's time at OCC.

"They kind of act like brothers," Hill said. "Honestly, it's hilarious. They kind of joke around with each other. I don't know how long they've known each other for, but they seem like childhood friends – good, good buddies – that's for sure."

Webster echoed Hill's comments, also describing himself and Baumgartner as "brothers."

Baumgartner said their relationship reminds him of another kind of partnership.

"I'd say that if he had different equipment and wasn't so fugly. We fill enough gaps [with each other] that would be good for marriage," Baumgartner said with his characteristic deadpan delivery. "Yeah, it's just not gonna work. We just can't."

Some Harbour residents alarmed by non-student neighbors

Kate Bent, Contributor

Oct 12, 2022



A student walks along the Adams side of The Harbour, OCC's on-campus residences, during the fall 2022 semester.

Photo by Stephanie Morales

Some students at The Harbour are feeling unsafe due to the presence of non-student residents.

Because of Equal Opportunity housing laws, The Harbour, a residential dorm located on the Orange Coast College campus, is currently allowing non-student and older residents along with families to live there.

Coast Report spoke to 30 residents of The Harbour to find out how they were feeling and found that 17 out of 30 residents said that they were uncomfortable with living alongside non-students. Furthermore, 22 out of the 30 residents said that they were unaware that non-students would be living there when they moved into The Harbour.

Some of those interviewed said they were concerned about teenagers living in close proximity to residents in their 60s.

A source who wished to remain anonymous because she feared retaliation, said she worried about young people being paired as roommates with older residents.

“And I don't feel that's safe, especially, let's just say that a 60-year-old is rooming with a 19-year-old girl or boy,” she said.

Jay Pearlman, vice president of Advisory Services for the Scion Group, which owns The Harbour, said in an email that the roommate selection process was measured and based on student preferences.

“For all those in two- and four-bedroom apartments, we are thoughtful about roommate assignments,” Pearlman said in an email. “Residents complete a roommate matching questionnaire as part of the application process and we do our best to accommodate all stated preferences.”

“For example, residents can indicate a preference for male, female, or non-gender-specific roommates,” Pearlman said via email. “Residents can also request specific roommates, which sometimes are a different gender. We estimate under 10 apartments at The Harbour have male and female residents together.”

Jack, who requested that we not use his last name because he feared getting evicted for speaking out, said that initially he had been paired with older residents as roommates but asked to live with residents his own age.

“I just didn't feel like it was my habitat,” Jack said. “I just felt like I wanted to be with kids my age and have that experience of being in college.”

Another student who asked to only be identified as Jenna said that she was concerned about the backgrounds of non-student and older residents.

She said that when she was moving in, her mother, who is a judge, recognized one of the older residents as a frequent defendant in her courtroom.

“I think it’s why my mom freaked out,” Jenna said.

The anonymous source said that as she was moving in, she and her parents were alarmed by the older residents.

“The first week my parents come to see and make sure I'm settled in, there's grown men just walking around,” she said. “And obviously when I signed up for this, I was told it was student housing for within our age group, so I had no idea that there were going to be grown ups living here. Grownups will be just walking around. You're not sure if it's someone's dad or if he lives next to you – there's no idea, and that just wasn't clear at all either.”

Elliot, a student resident who asked that we only use his first name, said that there should be security measures in place to ensure that non-student residents are safe.

“I think they should definitely do a background check,” Elliot said.

Pearlman did not answer the question of whether or not background checks are required.

Despite concerns by some residents, Dean of Students Derek Vergara said that his experiences with older residents in the past has generally been positive.

“I've been to other institutions – UCI, Riverside – I worked at other places where we've had older students, and it was fine,” Vergara said. “Because what happens is that they become part of a community of people, or they're living out a dream they've always had. They have had families or they're widowed or something like 'I want to go back to school, I want to live on campus.' I've had experiences where older students live among them, and it's a hit and miss.”

According to their website, The Harbour is an Equal Opportunity housing provider, which means they cannot discriminate because of age.

Because of state and federal laws, they also cannot discriminate based on familial status. This means that families with young children are living in The Harbour.

“I see children outside my courtyard almost every single day,” the anonymous source, who fears retaliation for speaking out, said. “There’s a baby upstairs living above me that I hear every day.”

Vergara said that families in The Harbour are beneficial to all residents and allows them to see students on an untraditional path to education.

“I think it’s good for our students of any age to see families there,” Vergara said. “For instance, there, we have somebody that I know of, that is a single mother. She’s a student, but also a worker in The Harbour. Her child goes to the Child Development Center here. So in that scheme of her life, it’s a great place for her to get her education.”

Pearlman said in an email that while non-student residents – including older residents and families – live on the property, priority is given to full-time students.

“The community is owned by a non-profit and was built using bonds in affiliation with the Coast Community College District, to benefit the CCCD and OCC,” Pearlman said in an email. “For this reason, there are eligibility requirements and priority given to certain populations. First priority is given to full-time OCC students; other members of the community including part-time students, students from the other two colleges in the District, and staff are also eligible.”

Pearlman went on to say that the number of older people in The Harbour was very low, with 99% of the population being under 30.

For some residents, even a small number of older residents causes safety concerns.

For Mia Espinoza, a graphic design major and Harbour resident, the presence of older residents has made her worried that problems could occur.

“I feel like it’s kind of unsafe,” Espinoza said. “I kind of fear everyday what is going to happen.”

Features Editor Kate Meyers and Sports Editor Timothy Hessen contributed to this story.

Harbour residents believe mold led to illness

Kate Bent, Contributor

Dec 19, 2022



Build up – believed by the resident to be mold – forms on an air conditioner vent in an apartment at The Harbour.

Photo by Khalid Alsadek

Some Orange Coast College student residents at The Harbour began to notice what they believed to be mold in their bathrooms and on air conditioning vents in their apartments this fall, and a few fell seriously ill.

For Jubilee, a freshman criminal justice major, her fall semester was an ordeal that included urgent care visits, hiring a lawyer and passing out in the school bathroom multiple times due to illness.

She asked that Coast Report only use her first name because she fears legal retaliation from The Harbour.

“The first week that I lived at The Harbour, I pulled an all-nighter one night,” Jubilee said. “I was just in my room doing homework and I felt my throat getting really sick. I didn’t know [what was] going on. And then the next day, my left side of my neck was super inflamed and my left lymph node was puffing up really big.”

Jubilee said that over the course of a week, her inflamed lymph node grew and became more painful.

“I couldn’t go to school because I was unable to eat,” she said. “I couldn’t drink anything. It would hurt so bad. I was just in my room crying. So I went to the school, the nurse at OCC, and they were like, ‘you need to go to the hospital right now.’”

At the urgent care, she was told that she had a peritonsillar abscess from a deep infection of the neck and head, and if she had waited a few days longer, it could have burst, flooding her lungs with fluid, which could have resulted in her death.

“[Urgent care staff] had no idea what caused it,” Jubilee said. “They said normally it’s caused from a tonsil infection, but they didn’t know how I got it because I was negative for strep, and COVID-19 and a ton of other things. I told them about the mold thing and urgent care, they were like, ‘oh, my God, that is really dangerous, and you shouldn’t be there and that can really harm your body.’”

However, the doctors she saw following her urgent care visit could not confirm that mold had made her sick.

California Poison Control System San Diego Division Director Lee Cantrell said that most often, mold doesn’t cause severe illnesses.

“Just because there is mold doesn’t mean there will be harm,” Cantrell said. “It’s a common misconception.”

However, Project Manager for Mold Inspection Sciences Ben Wieser said that some molds are potentially harmful. According to their website, Mold Inspection Sciences “specializes in mold inspection, mold detection and mold testing” and has offices in Orange County. They have also done mold assessments in student housing at other campuses.

Wieser said that molds can become “dangerous” as they consume chemical building materials. He said that byproducts of mold can “potentially cause some people respiratory distress and other medical factors.”

Jubilee said that respiratory problems were one of the major symptoms of her illness.

“I was just having such horrible breathing issues at night and I didn't want to sleep there,” she said. “I had constant sinus infections. I literally couldn't hear anything, or I was just constantly coughing all the time. I was just dry heaving every single day for two months. I just felt like I was dying.”

Jubilee said she also lost a significant amount of weight during her illness.

“One of my worst symptoms that I really believed to be from the mold was that I had no appetite at all for two months, and I barely ate a thing,” she said. “I lost 20 pounds, and I passed out in the school bathroom three times.”

With her illness worsening, Jubilee decided to stay with her family for a bit.

“I went back up to San Francisco for the first time in two months,” Jubilee said. “The first night that I slept at home, I could breathe a little bit again. I wasn't breaking into huge coughing fits, and I was like, ‘wow!’ By the end of the trip, I was eating a little bit again.”

She said that her mother was shocked by her appearance.

“My mom saw me when she picked me up from the airport, and she just started crying because she was like, ‘you look so ill!’” Jubilee said.

She said that her visit home reinforced her belief that something in her apartment was causing her illness.

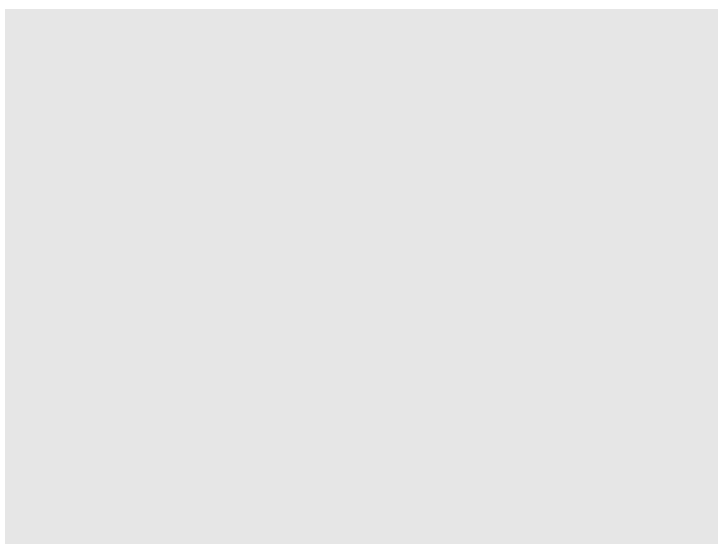
Jubilee said that her illness caused her to miss many classes and her grades began to suffer. Ultimately, she made the difficult decision to drop out of OCC and return home permanently.

After leaving The Harbour, Jubilee's illness was gone in a matter of weeks.

Jubilee also said that her roommate suffered an illness with the same symptoms. Her roommate was also forced to drop out of school and return home. Jubilee said that her roommate also believed that her illness was caused by growths in their bathroom, and was fine a few weeks after leaving. Both women had a history of mold allergies in their families.

Jubilee described the growths in her bathroom as “stalactites” and said that her former roommate who still lives in the building said that the problem continues.

As Jubilee was trying to leave, The Harbour was refusing to let her out of her lease and she feared that legal action would be taken against her. Jubilee then hired an attorney who specializes in mold cases who helped her break her lease.



A resident takes a picture of apparent mold in her apartment's bathroom at The Harbour.

Photo courtesy of Jubilee

Another resident, Aisling, said that when she reported mold in her apartment, maintenance did not come to fix it. Instead, she received an email that was sent to all residents advising them on how to prevent mold.

Coast Report obtained the email from Vice President of Advisory Services for The Scion Group Jay Pearlman. The Scion Group is a student housing firm that operates The Harbour along with 126 other properties around the country.

The email acknowledged that mold and mildew were present in some of the units as a result of humidity and high temperatures. It suggested that residents only run their air conditioner units between 68 and 72 degrees while keeping windows closed and that bathroom doors should be left open to allow for air flow. The email also stated that cooking and showers could be contributing to the problem so residents should run the exhaust while doing either activity.

According to the email, Harbour staff were conducting checks of all AC units and that residents should notify them of any condensation or leaks on the units.

Pearlman was emailed multiple times in mid December but did not respond to questions by publication date.

Aisling said she was disappointed by the tone of the email.

"I don't remember the exact contents but it felt like it was like turning it on us. Like 'If you guys leave your windows open then you're gonna get mold in your apartments,'" Aisling said.

Aisling said that she was shocked that new buildings would have so many issues with mold.

"They're two or three years old," Aisling said. "There shouldn't be mold problems in them this early. So the fact that there is I feel like it's a reflection on how clean they keep the spaces, how up to date the air conditioning is and the vent system."

She said that cleanliness was an issue from the time she arrived at The Harbour.

"When we moved in on the first day, I remember finding dust all over the place," Aisling said. "And the vents, they were covered in dirt so we had to clean them off. And that was one of my very first memories with my roommates – cleaning the vents together."

Mold wasn't just a problem contained to a few apartments. In a survey conducted by Coast Report in December, 16 out of 41 residents polled stated that they had experienced mold.

Jubilee said that her time at The Harbour and the decision to leave was one of the most difficult experiences of her life.

“Because I had to withdraw, which has made it really hard, I feel like my educational journey kind of really stepped back,” Jubilee said. “I really love a lot of the people I met there and I don’t regret that but I wasted so much money living there. I really set myself back. I don’t think that it’s OCC’s fault, but I do regret choosing to live at The Harbour.”

Views Editor Khalid Alsadek contributed to this report.

Undocumented students face worries, additional barriers to success

Kate Bent, Contributor

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Image by Andrey Popov via Getty Images/iStockphoto

For students like Orange Coast College alumna Valeria, who asked that she only be identified by her first name, uncertainties caused by documentation status are ever-present and cause additional challenges not faced by the average college student.

“Knowing the uncertainty of your future in the United States, and your ability of not being able to work, I think the biggest [challenge] is your motivation to continue every day, to get a job and to potentially be doing something that you enjoy,” Valeria said. “But that’s not really possible if there’s no legislation that they make, or they stop the legislation that allows you to work legally. Then what do you do?”

OCC Student Equity manager Maricela Sandoval said that legislation was just part of the complex puzzle of being undocumented.

“For undocumented students there's a layer of uncertainty that clouds so much of the day to day, and that could be a lot to deal with,” Sandoval said. “That can be heavy on a person's psyche, to still operate like a citizen of the world, knowing that there are limitations to your access in the society.”

Part of the unpredictability stems from the constant fear of deportation.

In Valeria's family, both she and her mother are undocumented while her three younger siblings are citizens. She fears that if her mother is deported, the responsibility of caring for her siblings would land on her shoulders or her sister's.

“After me, it's my sister who's in community college at OCC and then my two younger siblings are in elementary school,” Valeria said. “Knowing that any day my mom could be deported and then it would land on me or my sister, to have to take care of them and be their parent.”

While she tries not to think about it, worries about deportation are always at the back of her mind.

“It's kind of like how when you leave an app, when you don't close an app, but it's in the background of your phone,” Valeria said. “That's kind of how I have it. It's in the background of my mind. But sometimes it'll be the main thing. But it's always present.”

Another source of uncertainty is ever changing rulings for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which protects immigrants who came to the U.S. as children, from the threat of deportation and allows them access to work permits.

Valeria is a DACA recipient, having been brought here from Mexico by her mother at 9- months old. She said she is often confused by adjustments to DACA but looks for events to explain them.

“When new DACA rulings come out, I try to look out for events that will break it down,” Valeria said.

Sandoval said that changing DACA rulings can be a cause of worry for the undocumented community.

“There is a lot of anxiety around it,” Sandoval said. “Because it's something that has changed lives, folks that don't have to, they're able to participate in society in a way that they weren't, they might not have been able to before.”

One of the most important aspects of DACA is that it allows recipients to work here legally.

For those without DACA, it is often difficult to access employment.

“A lot of people think we're stealing jobs but it's actually really hard to get a job when you're undocumented,” OCC's UndocuScholar specialist Dulce Castellon said. “You don't have a Social Security number and you don't have the right paperwork,”

She said that if someone is able to find a job at all, undocumented immigrants often earn less than their documented counterparts.

“The unfortunate reality of the situation is that a lot of individuals that are undocumented are paid a drastically lower amount,” Castellon said. “Some of the voices don't want undocumented people here, but if they can get away with having the labor done for a lower wage, that's an option. I can't really say where, but there could be businesses, there could be restaurants that maybe allow it to happen under the table.”

Castellon said that economic necessity often drives undocumented immigrants into exploitative working conditions.

“Because they need to work, they're being taken advantage of,” Castellon said.

Since they can't access high paying jobs, many undocumented immigrants struggle with financial insecurity.

Valeria said this has been true during her college experience.

“I would say that one of the bigger struggles with college has been finances,” Valeria said. “I was always attending [Student] Equity and trying to get the bus money, the book money supply that they would give out. Definitely been a challenge, especially when we had electronic books and you had to buy the homework subscriptions. Those are about \$60. But it was difficult because we didn't have enough to even pay for rent. “

Dealing with such a variety of complex issues can have a negative impact on the mental health of some undocumented students.

According to Mark Barajas, a licensed psychologist and associate professor of psychology at St. Mary's College of California, who has treated undocumented students in his private practice, additional issues of racism also impact mental health.

"We know college students in general face higher levels of depression and anxiety than the general population at large," Barajas said. "And then undocumented students as a subset of college students face even greater concerns of particularly anxiety, depression."

Barajas said that racial discrimination can also affect undocumented students' mental health.

"Undocumented students are going to be most typically racial and ethnic minorities," he said. "We know also that there's lots of minorities in United States that face racism and prejudice and discrimination, which exacerbates the risk factors for mental health. So undocumented students face the intersection of all those risk areas."

Rodriguez said she is fortunate not to have experienced extreme racism but she encountered anti-immigrant rhetoric on campus when the OCC College Republicans had their "Build The Wall" event in 2019.

"There were a group of students that would put up their protests against immigrants and undocumented students, and you just felt unwelcomed – like the campus didn't actually care that you were there," Valeria said.

While she said she felt supported by the Student Equity office and Pirate's Cove, she did encounter institutional discrimination at OCC.

"Me and another student were looking at some forms that the financial aid office had printed out or flyers they had made for some financial aid workshops," Valeria said. "They had wording that seemed very exclusionary for undocumented students. For example, it had the words 'alien registration number.'"

Rodriguez said that some of the forms contained untrue information that could discourage some undocumented students from applying.

“And it was talking about how your parent needs to have a Social Security number, when those are not exactly true,” she said. “Using the word ‘alien’ is kind of, it's not a great word, it doesn't make anyone feel good.”

But Barajas thinks that some of that discrimination can be rectified by looking at undocumented people beyond their statuses.

“While national origin and documentation status, no doubt, are a big part of an undocumented person's identity, there's more to them than that,” Barajas said. “So try to not overly focus on that part of them, to also see them as a whole being, as a whole person that they are.”

Valeria said that people can come to a greater understanding of undocumented immigrants by hearing about their experiences.

“I would say first, just listen to their stories and everything that they've had to overcome to get to where they are,” Valeria said. “Be open to dialogue and just try to understand what it really looks like to be an undocumented student, or just an undocumented immigrant here in the U.S.”

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A playlist for when love goes bad

Kate Bent, Editor in Chief

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Graphic created by Stephanie Morales using Canva



Love Sucks: Anti-Valentine's Day Anthems

Coast Report

PREVIEW

1 You Give Love A Bad Name • Bon Jovi

2 July • Noah Cyrus

3 For Now • Sam Fischer

Let's face it: sometimes love sucks. Like really sucks. Like makes you curse-the-day-you-were-born sucks. Never fear – we have the perfect playlist for sobbing uncontrollably in the shower while wondering if you're destined to die alone and be found two weeks after your death with your face half eaten by cats. This is nearly four hours of jams made for having a complete mental breakdown. Disclaimer: Coast Report is not liable for any damages you cause to your ex's car after listening. We can't be held responsible if you have a Carrie Underwood-in-2005 moment. Whether you want to cry, rage or mourn an unrequited love, this is the playlist for you. We gotchu, boo boo kitten.

This playlist has a little something for everybody: from Ella Fitzgerald to Doja Cat to Tom Waits. We've got all the bases covered.

Our journey through the descent into hell that is love begins with the classic banger from 1986 by Bon Jovi "You Give Love A Bad Name." The overly-coiffed New Jersey natives were at the pinnacle of the stadium hair rock mountain in the 80s and they pulled out all the stops on this track. With brash guitars and thundering percussion, it is the perfect track for you to listen to in your Delorean after Tiffany from HR dumped you for Brad from accounting.

We progress deeper into the abyss and take a stop at Adele's "Someone Like You" Adele is the queen of the sad chick power ballads and the G.O.A.T of being in your feels – hard. Everyone loves Adele but those of us with chemical imbalances seem to love her even more. This is the perfect day-you-

got-dumped song meant to be belted inartfully at full volume while tears slowly roll down your cheeks. The final track on her seminal album "21." "Someone Like You" packs a powerful punch and cemented Adele's superstardom.

As we turn a corner at Satan laughing with Elon Musk, we come across the ultimate scorned woman anthem "You Oughta Know" by Alanis Morissette but this time off the "Bridgerton" soundtrack accompanied by Duomo and Kroma Strings. For some of us listening to the album the original track was on, "Jagged Little Pill," was the last time we experienced human emotions. Not all will love the cover, but this version has the feeling of buttery leather softening through care and use. Morissette's voice has matured but been made richer in the process. The slower pace and the addition of a string section mellows the biting anger of the original. This is a woman who has gained wisdom from confronting failures and has made peace with her past.

Past the bridge over the lava river, we meet the White Witch herself: Steve Nicks as part of Fleetwood Mac with their track "Go Your Own Way" off the classic album "Rumours." This album answers the question: "what would you get if you put four people in a studio who all hate each other after intra-band entanglements went south, and have unlimited supplies of cocaine and resentment, and had them make an album?" This track deals with the process of letting a lover go after the relationship has ended and should be played on repeat if you're holding on to an ex. Set them free, honey!

At a fire pit with the mother of every person you've ever dated, "Flowers" by Miley Cyrus is playing. "Flowers" is what Cyrus does best: power pop with a dance beat. The theme of finding self-empowerment from the ashes of yet another failed relationship along the track's simple yet infinitely catchy melody has resonated big with audiences, landing the number one spot on Billboard's Global 200 for a fourth week having amassed 146.8 billion streams between Feb. 3 and Feb. 9

By the cave with health insurance execs playing poker, we find Olivia Rodrigo's "driver's license" Everyone from guys in post-punk bands to the President of the United States could not stop talking about "driver's license" – so much so that she was invited to the White House in July 2021 to promote vaccinations. The track, which currently has \$1.7 billion streams on Spotify, took over the world in 2021 and spawned its own Saturday Night Live sketch. Despite its cultural ubiquity, "driver's license" rode that sweet spot of being very much of the moment without getting over-played with its timeless theme of a first heartbreak.

In the final leg of the journey, we find the only power greater than hell itself, Beyoncé with “Sorry” from her 2016 album “Lemonade” Written after her husband, Jay Z, famously cheated on her, Queen Bey threw her pain into her pen and crafted an opus about how the men in her life ended up disappointing her. The grenade thrown in the fox hole is “Sorry” where she unleashes her controlled bitter rage and makes no apologies for herself.

We now come to the end. Whether you remain in relationship hell or ascend to heaven is up to the fates but know that when heartache seems its most bleak, there will always be an opportunity to meet someone else who will inevitably break your heart. But don't worry, music will never break up with you so you'll never be truly alone.

What do you think we should have added? Let us know at [@coastreport](#) on Twitter or drop a comment below.