

Before the Cynicism Wins!

(Before the Pure is Putrid)

*An analysis of (mainly) Snow Day by The Odd Ditties.
By A. U. Grimalkin.*

"On each of the Rockumentary records there has been a song idea that connected everything together for me and felt like a giant hole in the track list until I figured it out. Snow Day was that idea for [Backstage]." - Austin Ash Lemon, Sept. 2025

"People are sick." - Austin Ash Lemon, Dec. 2025

Throughout *Backstage* (2025) by The Odd Ditties, there's a recurring juxtaposition made between childhood, usually with the connotation of innocence, and some sort of stain. It's introduced early on in the album, within the first half of the opening track *It's All Downhill From Here*, with "I wet my onesie, but I'm maturer than then/ Because now when I wet the bed/ it's ejaculate instead." Other instances of this juxtaposition are similarly associated with sex: *Baby Goes Back* has a "slimy pile of fetishes/ That I find myself infected with," and *Wake Up* has "my pizza slice's grease is wiped/ On jammies with an open fly." These lines are notable for tying into both *Ode to Procreation* and *Can't Wait!*. For the latter, it's subtler, but it's due to the specific food cited; "pizza-eating record holder" is one of the narrator's earlier, childlike fantasies about adulthood.

"My pizza slice's grease is wiped/ On jammies with an open fly" comes at the tail end of the *Wake Up* narrator at their job as a morning zoo host giving a run-down on all the ways that they're barely fit to be an adult, much less a parent. This line placement is due to the stain motif's association with sex, and sex's further association with pregnancy and childbirth (it's *Ode to Procreation*, specifically, after all). The narrator's sense of failure is exacerbated by the narrator being a "decade older now" than their mom was when she gave birth to them at roughly 16 (as mentioned in both *It's All Downhill From Here* and *Wake Up*, "by the time she acquired her drivers license/ Mother sprung me/ to commemorate this new plane of existence," and "Mom had hardly learned to drive/ Before I

glided through her thighs" respectively). Raising a kid is considered an almost inevitable responsibility of adulthood, to the point that the narrator considers it a milestone ringing it in ("to commemorate this new plane of existence" in *Downhill*). Simply put, the narrator is an adult with adult responsibilities who feels like they're falling behind by not specifically fulfilling the responsibility of having and raising a kid.

Fittingly, the next song on the album is entirely about being a kid getting the day off of school (and thus temporarily free of responsibility). *Wake Up* and *Snow Day* transition directly into each other. The narrator of *Wake Up* ends the song by getting ready to list school closures, and *Snow Day* begins with "the scrolling closures/ on the local morning show." Following these lines, we learn that "bacon stains pajama pants." This is an obvious callback to the final lines in *Wake Up*'s monologue, down to the food staining pajama pants- although *Wake Up* calls them the more childish "jammies". Two lyrics into *Snow Day*, the thesis of the song is set up; it's all about childhood being adulterated by and juxtaposed with becoming a grown-up.

Snow Day is also about appreciating every moment in life, which is explored elsewhere in *Backstage*. While the title track expresses the sentiment in a very morbid way ("Oh hey, we maybe should mention/ Every second you spend there/ Is one less you get before the dreaded tomb"), it becomes increasingly hopeful as it's repeated. The penultimate lines of the album, being the final iteration of this theme, are "All we ever get to live in/ Is the moment that we're in" in *My Room*, a song about growing up and leaving behind your childhood home.

In the title track, the seconds being spent "there" are spent in the womb (metaphorically "backstage", "in the green room.") The more time the subject of *Backstage* spends sealed away from the world, the less time they'll have to actually live. *My Room* ends with the narrator leaving their room to go out into the world. *Snow Day* leans more positively with its iteration, telling you to cherish every moment you get. The narrator has presumably left their house to play out in the snow, such as making the snow angels mentioned later on, leaving the green room and going out into the world.

Despite this, *Snow Day* makes it very clear that this is where the narrator believes their life will peak, similarly to *It's All Downhill From Here*. The two songs convey the same idea of someone's life only getting continuously worse, but in entirely different ways. "You could live forever but it wouldn't get better than this" would normally be considered a hyperbolic statement, but it's the same sentiment as the indictment on life *Downhill* expresses. The joy, "mirth" and freedom from responsibility that comes with a snow day will fade, until "some stormy December/ These grown-ups we sort of resemble/ Will see nothing special." In the context of a snow day, the immediate interpretation of "grown-ups we sort of resemble" is that it describes the narrator's parents, however it likely refers to the adult version of the narrator as well; exempt from the freedom of responsibility a snow day gives kids and completely unrecognizable to their younger self. This fits nicely with the transition from *Wake Up*. While the *Snow Day* narrator gets the day off, the former's narrator is actively at work and on the air, having to recount the very school closures celebrated in the latter.

Returning to the stain motif, it's somewhat abstractly employed when the snow is described as being "perfect like peanut butter/ Before the knife digs deep" in the following verse. The childhood set-up comes from the specific usage of peanut butter for the simile. Peanut butter is a very 'childish' ingredient, being used in school lunch cafeteria staple peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

The actual employment of the stain motif requires the following lines for context. A snow day and its reprieve from responsibility won't last forever, especially since "the sun is scheming to reveal the ground/ A couple snowplows/ And all of it will fade." These lines are reminiscent of an early line in *Wake Up*, "The rude shampoo and sun/ Collude to shove/ Pollutants into eyes," the sun being anthropomorphized as scheming in both. These lines in *Wake Up* are also more explicitly related to the stain motif, rather than abstracted like their *Snow Day* parallels are. This sets up the snow's removal (and how this brings back responsibilities like school) as analogous to growing up and gaining new responsibilities like work and raising children. The unbroken snow being melted and plowed away is analogous to the "knife dig[ging] deep" into the peanut butter.

In the bridge, *Snow Day* foretells the future: "Before you know it the hands of time/ Will trade a box of juice for a box of wine/ Before your eyes, your eyes will be older eyes/ Your snow angels will turn into chalk outlines." These lines are reminiscent of *It's All Downhill From Here*, specifically "Then without consent/ My head just kept getting upraised!/ 'Till I was adult size/ Absurdly, thirty seemed old/ but as I grow older/ The older older grows." This solidifies the ways *Snow Day* serves as a prequel to *Downhill*, since both songs describe growing up as an action done to the narrator (without their knowledge!) versus something the narrator does themselves, and use repetition to make a point about its suddenness; it happens so fast, only one or two words come to mind to describe it.

"Before your eyes, your eyes will be older eyes" also bring the lyrics "It would be a lie, if I were to imply I'm qualified/ To be the guy a pair of eyes/ Tiny, spying, open wide/ Should analyze or scrutinize/ Or frighteningly idolize/ To pry advice to utilize/ To strive to go by my design" from *Wake Up* to mind, continuing the idea of the child version of the narrator growing up into who may as well be a different person.

(As an aside, the lyric "Your snow angels will turn into chalk outlines" symmetrically alludes to both childhood and death. Snow angels and drawing with chalk are both childhood activities, while chalk outlines and angels are both associated with death.)

In the penultimate verse is the resolution of the song with "Grip this before it slips/ No day's quite so okay as/ Snow day/ Before the cynicism wins/ Before the pure is putrid." As you grow up, cynicism wins and childhood is made impure, so just enjoy being responsibility free while you can. The following lines, "You will scavenge after dragons/ Scratching savagely/ At some phantom itch" allude to the phrase "chasing the dragon," a drug-related term meaning the fruitless pursuit of a high off a drug that's equivalent to the first time you used it. The narrator will spend the rest of their life chasing the high point of this snow day, but it won't ever get better than this.

Even within the song, said high appears to wear off; the way the snow day is described becomes increasingly neutral. The song starts with the narrator "lacking an adequate word/ To describe the extent of this mirth" and ends with it simply being "so okay." It's rather similar to how the narrator of *Can't Wait!*'s fantasies of being an adult get more realistic and eventually cynical.

The way *Can't Wait!* sees this evolution is most evident in the lines "Pizza eating record-holder/ Leading NASA space explorer/ As the moments flow/ Watch me grow and grow" (with those last two lines tying back to "before your eyes your eyes will be older eyes," with someone viewing the act of growing up), "I can't wait till I'm an adult/ (Baby molars all are removed)/ This phase will pass where I'm such a dolt/ (Trade stroller for a used Subaru)" and "Mortgage payments, brain disorders/ Engagements, babies, other horrors/ Oh, the things you'll fear/ As it shambles near;" the narrator goes from childish optimism to realism to cynical pessimism. In being afraid of their future, the narrator isn't able to fully appreciate the present. This is exactly what *Snow Day* attempts to warn against, telling you to hold on to the present "before it slips."

"Standing on an ancient shoulder/ In the eye of the beholder/ As the thick fog clears/ Oh, dear God, it's here" are the lines that immediately follow the last example. Again, like *Downhill* and *Snow Day* do, *Can't Wait!* posits growing up as something that's been done to the narrator without warning. "Standing on an ancient shoulder" specifically is an interesting turn of phrase. It references the aphorism "standing on the shoulders of giants," a metaphor for building on previous discoveries to make your own. This would mean "standing on an ancient shoulder" refers to building on someone else's age or maturity. Considering the "thick fog" described in the next line, "ancient shoulder" is likely referring to that of the narrator's younger self. This brings back ideas explored early in *Snow Day*, with the adult version of the narrator only "sorta resembling" themselves as a child.

The closing lines of *Snow Day* are the narrator telling you to "cherish every moment/ Every one you spend/ Is one less you get." This in itself is reminiscent of an older song Austin wrote, *Future Tense*, which includes the lyrics "A hypocrite's advice/ Try not to waste your life/ Blink for one second, it'll pass you by," if only for the fact the narrator certainly doesn't end up cherishing every moment.

In conclusion, *Snow Day* is a song about holding on to childhood and being free of responsibility while you still can, all while being incredibly aware the threat of growing up and gaining responsibility looms; it's the glue holding Backstage's coming-of-age themes together.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to every member of Niftiverse that has read *Before The Cynicism Wins!* and given their feedback; special thanks to Cass, Jingles, and Nifty for their help with analysis and generally being on the same level of sicko about this as I am. Jingles and Nifty also helped to edit this paper.

Thank you to Austin Ash Lemon for writing Backstage. That was pret-ty cool of him to do!

Also, just one note. "People are sick." as a quote comes from Ash Lemon's reaction to *Ode to Procreation* showing up on his artist Spotify Wrapped as a song people "leaned on after dark," not about *Snow Day*. I thought it would be a funny opening, though, so it went in. ^_^.