



# THE PAW

Tualatin

High's

Electronic

Publication for

Art AND

Writing



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# LETTER FROM THE STAFF

Hello Readers,

Well, here we are again, kicking off second semester with a brand new issue of THE PAW! We hope that everyone's semester has started off smoothly. This makes our second issue of this year, and, as always, we the staff would like to send our thanks to all of you who were brave enough to submit your work. You literally keep us going, as THE PAW would not exist without your efforts! We hope that the readers will appreciate the work contained in this issue as well, and perhaps even be inspired to submit a piece of their own. Remember, everyone's work is welcome, not only students, but teachers as well! So if you are ever struck by a moment of creative genius, send in the product!

From,

Emma, co-founder,  
and the entire staff of THE PAW

## THE PAW STAFF

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# NAKED

The metamorphosis shocks  
sunshine and lava sprout  
harmonize to the  
gentle caress of Autumn  
solemn yet beautiful  
she reaches a time  
when it pains much  
too much to hide  
with every billowing leaf  
golden tears are shed  
the ground  
a vibrant sunset of colors  
plastered with sorrow  
That naked tree.  
she shivers and quakes  
Alone.  
through the blustery winter

Lainie Davis

# WORDS GO DRY

Words go dry  
before they leave the mouth  
the will to write has gone  
the stories have left me  
the minds distract  
the heart, intact  
no emotional ups or downs  
no feverish laughs  
no sobbing sounds  
time finally learned to freeze  
and the words go dry  
in the riverbed of thought  
a desert landscape  
until some monsoon comes again  
to drown it  
in new metaphors

McKinna Tillotson



I AM A SIMPLE MACHINE.

I RUN ON C12H22O11  
SUERTE  
AND THE INTELLECTUAL RE-  
VERBERATIONS  
OF THE THE INTELLIGENTSIA  
THAT HAUNT HALLS AND  
BOOKS.

THERE IS CHAOS  
BUILDING INSIDE ME  
A CHAOS THAT ONLY CA-  
MUS PREDICTED  
THAT ONLY BUDDHA UNDER-  
STOOD TO TRANSCEND  
THAT ONLY GOD HIMSELF  
LET SLIP  
BETWEEN HIS  
GOLDEN, FEATHERED  
FINGERS.  
UNPREDICTABLE.  
INEVITABLE.  
MEANINGLESS.  
AND BURSTING AT THE  
LOOSELY STITCHED SEAMS  
ALLOWING MY  
RAG DOLL SLEEVE OF SKIN  
TO EXPOSE THE MECHANICS  
OF MY HUMANITY.  
OF YOUR HUMANITY.  
OF OUR HUMANITY'S  
SOCIETY  
TRAPPED  
AND FLOWING RECKLESSLY  
THROUGH MY GEARS  
THAT PRECEDED YEARS  
AND TEARS  
THAT CONTRIBUTE  
TO THIS ONE MOMENT  
OF ABSOLUTE  
PLATONIC  
TRUTH.

IT IS GONE  
WHEN I OPEN MY EYES.

# PRE

*Laura Houlberg*

the saccharine tongue choreogra-  
phy  
that slipped past throat and cheek  
eroded your enamel  
exposing the roots  
that touched ground while you  
were praying  
for god to save your soul.

they pulled out from your head  
and pushed into the soil  
your jaw cracked open  
your face split in two  
a physical reminder of the persona  
you embodied.

your teeth roots branched out  
and your body stood straight  
tall  
stiff  
a linear monument  
as branches sprouted  
from your knees  
wrapping and twisting ankles  
grazing toes  
pleading to heaven  
towards which they grew.

you fed yourself,  
as you did the roses, Scarlet.

*Laura Houlberg*

# I know



He finally woke up, his body aching with the pain of his sickness. It was the middle of the night, but his clean, white room glowed with the sickly green light of his monitor. He could no longer even hear his own loud wheeze of breath. It didn't matter, anyway. The sound of the machines was the only way he knew that he was still alive.

Beep, beep. Wheeze, wheeze.

He thought about his childhood. His father had been a poisonous cancer (hah, hah) of a man, and drank himself into an early grave. His mother, a frail woman, then tried to raise him on her own. She lied to him about the father he couldn't remember. He didn't die overseas, fighting the Germans, but rather, in his armchair, fighting the drink. Some war hero. He lost the only one he fought against himself.

Wheeze, wheeze. Beep, beep.

He first tried a cigarette at the age of fourteen, which feels like a whole other lifetime ago. Back in those days, he wore a leather jacket, had hair full of Pomade, and for years, would just smoke, drink, and get his hands up any poodle skirt he could find. Eventually, he got more than just his hands up one of those skirts.

If only he hadn't. No smokes, no booze, no trouble. If he hadn't, his life would've been better. If he hadn't, he might have a chance of seeing just one more sunrise.

Beep, beep. Wheeze, wheeze.

Their wedding hadn't been one filled with too much love. She was becoming full with child, and he

had a black eye, a brand-new wedding gift from his new father-in-law.

They stayed together because they had to. If, at the very, very least, for the kids.

One day, after his kids were

## *Dying With Regret*

Hayley Leeper

all grown up, he came home to find his wife gone. No note, no nothing. All of her clothes were gone. All of her personal belongings. The house itself seemed empty, and not even a trace of her scent was left behind. He then smoke and drank until he threw up.

He realized, hanging over the toilet, that no one had ever really loved him. Not even the woman with which he was supposed to have spent his whole life. This led him to wonder, if no one had loved him, had he loved anyone?

Wheeze, wheeze. Beep beep.

The next years were all a blur. He drank, he smoked, he worked, he slept. Oh, sure, his children would visit every once in a while, but they never stayed for too long. Who would want to?

And, soon, he ended up here. It had all gone so fast. When he was young, everyone told him to make the best of life, and that it goes by fast. Only now, knocking on Death's door, he understood what it meant.

He was frail now, cold and grey in colour, and soggy from the chemo and all the surgery. Even his blue eyes, bright and sparkling when he was young, had dulled to match his skin and hair. Speaking of which, in his youth, it was jet black, and always perfectly styled. Now, it seemed as pale and as sparse as the down of a

duckling. It was as if the harsh realities of his whole life had drained all his colour, and dulled down the edges he had had in his youth.

If only he could do it all again. He would do it differently.

The biggest regret, he thought, was not all the smoking that was killing him now, but, rather, that there was a lack of love. But, how can one know love if there isn't any around? Well, he thought, just because one had never had a dog, doesn't mean one doesn't know what it is, nor does it lessen their want for one. He prided himself on his ability to put anything into layman's terms. There was at least one thing he could do properly.

Love, he thought. Why hadn't he gotten his fair share? Was there some Higher Power who was rationing out the love, and decreed that he wasn't fit for it? Or, had he simply not put enough love out there to get some back?

Then, he realized. He wasn't a bad person. Not at all. Sure, he led a bad life, and had made some terrible decisions, but he has regret about it all. Surely, knowing that you've done wrong counts for something.

Suddenly, his skin went cold. Inside himself, however, he felt an odd warmth, like a small burning ember had been dropped into his stomach. The coldness on his skin, however, spread, and became icy. He gasped one last, shuddering breath, and dropped back onto his pillow. The only noise in the room now was one long, continuous beep from the monitor, confirming that Death had just let him in.

The sun rose just then, turning the clouds various hues of pink and orange, and lighting up his room, in which he died content. Content, for at least a few seconds of his life.

# Slaughterhouse Ridge

The hill was nothing special, just a small dune overlooking several trenches and the slave pit behind it. But already the sand had been charred to black glass and the entire area was littered with the dead bodies of humans and Drantless who had been sending attack after attack at the other forces, neither side having a clear advantage. Even the elite were having trouble breaking through.

Captain Sharon Michaels of A Company, 7th regiment, 22nd Infantry, crouched behind the dune, plasma beams from the defenders kicking up sand columns all around her. Other soldiers around her stayed as close to the ground as possible, with some of the more religious reciting the 23rd psalm over and over again. The suits could take more than enough punishment from lighter energy weapons, but these Drantless were using something like a miniature railgun, and it was killing them off.

"Captain," Sergeant Major Johnson called though his Artificial Intelligence unit. Johnson was originally from the 223rd, but after showing immense bravery on Titan he was transferred to the 22nd. that was about a month ago. "Corporal Davidson got hit."

"How bad?"

"Lieutenant McPherson pulled him out, and he said Davidson might live if we get him off planet soon."

"Call an evac shuttle and order all AIs whose owners are injured but not dead to take them there."

"Yes ma'am." Johnson crawled away from her. She brought

her Razor Minigun over the top of the dune and fired, blue glints of energy tearing the Drantless to pieces. She hit the deck when their mini-railguns came back.

"Johnson, are there any artillery units in the area?"

"One or two, I guess. The nearest aid is a Petraeus on hill 4173."

"Call them."

Captain Richardson brought the massive cannon of his tank to level and opened fire. The Type-1211 medium tank disintegrated from the shot, its turret lurching back and spewing fire. He turned the turret to the left and let loose a barrage of missiles, which bracketed an R-70B attack bomber and sent it hurtling into another medium tank.

The M3A2 he was commanding rolled down the hill towards the enemy. He swung the turret around again and sent another into a nearby Type-1211. The shot did not destroy the enemy tank, but it did manage to cripple it for a well placed missile to finish it off. One of the destroyed tanks was blocking the path of the Petraeus. Richardson merely shrugged and crushed the burning hulk under the eighteen hundred ton tank.

"Transmission coming in." his AI said from its consol near his wrist.

"Who's it from?"

"Data reads it as an AI belonging to the 22nd infantry on hill 231."

"Slaughterhouse Ridge? Jesus, those poor doomed fools."

"Perhaps you should listen to what they have to say?"

"Look, right now I can't support an infantry division; I've got an entire battalion of medium and light tanks surrounding me. I'm picking them off easily from the hill, but there's so many that by the time I begin to support them they'll be dead."

"Shall I tell them that you cannot be drawn away?"

"No, I'll tell them."

"Echo-Three Five, do you copy?" Sharon was trying to raise B Company to see if they could come and consolidate their force "Echo-Three Five, are you there?"

"Echo-Three Five to Bravo-87. What's wrong?"

"We need to consolidate forces; Converge on point YR-12, hill 231. Do you copy?"

"Negative; we're pinned down in sector 10. The Drantless smashed a Russian armored division and we are almost surrounded. We can't move. They've got heavy tanks moving into position-" the transmission was cut short by the sound of a heavy laser firing, followed by static.

"Oh god. We lost B Company. Johnson, have you raised the Petraeus yet?"

"Yes; sending transmission now." there was brief static in the suit before a voice came through.

"This is Petraeus Anne's Revenge, Captain Richardson speaking."

"Captain, we just lost B Company and need fire support on hill 231."

"Negative; I'm getting swarmed by light and medium tanks. I can't contribute any fire."

## ~ Bobby Black

I'm sorry."

"At least your still here. AI, end transmission." The communication with the Petraeus ended. Sharon loaded another clip of low-payload grenades into her Razor and popped over the top to fire. She could see the entire battle from here; there were about eight hundred Drantless in this trench alone, supported by several light tanks. She could see about two lower battle groups heading towards the trench, and she picked those as her target.

Using the digital screen from the suit, Sharon adjusted her aim so the grenades would hit these new arrivals on the first shot. She had to duck to avoid being hit by energy bullets from the enemy in the trench, but her aim was still on when she fired four grenades, two for each lower battle group. The first group simply vanished in a cloud of blue and white from the distilled antimatter, while the second one lost only the back two rows when arranged in their 5x10 block. The group almost broke, but the Lower Battle Master rallied the men and they continued towards the trench.

"This is not working." She said when she dropped behind the dune again.

"You're telling me," Johnson said "We're already at 60% casualties, and if they receive more re-enforcements we're either going to have to fall back or be annihilated."

"Wait a minute. Call those other artillery units in the area and see if they can lend us aid."

"Got it." there was a brief pause while Johnson set up the

communication. "I've got the 17th Mechanized Artillery of the 3rd armored on call."

"Put them through."

"Captain Sharon Michaels?"

"Yes."

"This is Sergeant Major Powell speaking. You wish to request an artillery strike?"

"Yes, I need at least twenty anti-person shells on the enemy positions on Slaughterhouse Ridge. Can you do that?"

"We can do better; we have three Leonidas Missile Systems in position. Twenty four missiles, High Explosive, on the way; splash fifteen."

"Okay." She turned off the connecting and shouted to what remained of the company.

"TwentyfourHighExplosive missiles en route; splash in twelve. Get out of the way if you don't want to get pulverized." The armor clad humans ran from the hill and hit the deck, just as the scream from the rockets became loud enough to hear over the current fighting.

Each missile hit the enemy trench at almost the speed of light, and with the added explosives combined with the kinetic energy of the missile the resulting explosion was almost the equivalent of 800 pounds of TNT being detonated. As the first rocket hit the trench, another followed immediately behind that, and another behind that. The rolling barrage of missiles reduced the trench, the dune, and almost thirty yards of ground behind them to nothing more than a collection of smoldering craters.

Sharon looked up and

saw where there once was Slaughterhouse Ridge. Charred bodies of the Drantless had been flung all the way to their position, their faces wide with shock and agony. The tanks that had supported them had vanished as if they were never there, and an eerie gray smoke drifted over the position.

"Well, the hill's not going to do anyone any good now." she said. Johnson was standing there, almost dumbly; even if she could not see his face through the screen of his helmet, she could tell he was shocked.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

"So much destruction..." he said.

"That's what a battery of three Leonidas Missile Systems can do. Come on, we've got a slave pit to take."

"But still, doesn't this mean something to you?"

"No. The dead do not 'speak to me', as so many civilians think they do. They're dead, a life that has become a statistic in some madman's game of football. I don't care if we have to destroy an entire planet, there is nothing that will make me show sympathy to those that do not need anything at all. The only thing that matters now is how badly we hit the enemy, and if we can do that enough then our losses will not mean 'how many have died' but rather 'how many of them fell for one of ours'. That's what this says to me." Sharon turned and walked into the smoke, her suit making her look like a demon from a fairytale.

## Singular Appreciation

He is sitting in his lamp-lit room  
 bent over the keyboard  
 the laptop's harsh light illuminates his  
 face  
 revealing a calm smile.  
 He has been trying to write a poem  
 about a brute with a contorted snarl  
 and savage wrinkles between  
 its desperate eyes.  
 He knows there is no future for this  
 poem.  
 There is no hope for it.  
 It is a cliched idea explicated a million  
 times  
 in a million ways  
 which are all different  
 but the same.  
 He leans back  
 smiles  
 and delivers a robust laughter.  
 He is remembering  
 that earlier today  
 his colleagues decided one of his poems  
 wasn't good enough  
 for a publication.  
 He finds relief in the knowledge  
 that he is imperfect  
 that his poetry doesn't have to be  
 accepted by everyone.  
 That he is just one writer in a million  
 and his poem about  
 the brute with a contorted snarl  
 and savage wrinkles between  
 its desperate eyes  
 can be his  
 alone  
 and no one else needs to like it.

## Print

Metol with phenidone  
 Dimezone and hydroquinone  
 Dilute the silver halides  
 That which hid in the light  
 Revealed now in the darkness

Tainted silver is immediate  
 So swift in its arrival  
 Acetic acid halts the war  
 Between the darkness and the light  
 Suspended in time is the blood of hues  
 Soaked into the spectrum  
 A discrepancy of grays

A trio of chemicals  
 The sodium brothers  
 Strips the animosity  
 From the hearts of warring opposites  
 Rendered harmless are the armies

Cradled in di-hydrogen oxygen  
 Wounds are gently cleansed  
 Treaties made in congregations of contrast  
 Separate chronicles made into a single kinship  
 in sight

From the war-zone  
 Emerges a beautiful harmony  
 A composition of history  
 Forever captured

Etched in the landscape  
 A portrait of actuality  
 Interpreted in perceptions

Art birthed from symbiotic ingenuity  
 Exposed by means of chemistry

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The pencil grips friendliness,  
ready to jot down in freeness,  
it urges you on,  
you become very fond.  
It has a mysterious beaming.  
Without notice you are writing.  
What you will write today,  
who knows what it will convey.  
Writing imparts many feelings,  
It has many dealings  
Passion,  
Personification,  
Diction,  
making allusion,  
motivation,  
Resolution,  
Fiction,

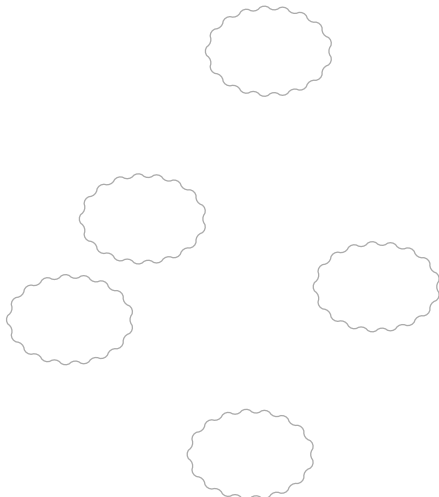
Action,  
Alliteration  
This is the end of my say,  
I'll bid you good day.  
Now go out and write,  
Climb the highest heights.  
No fright,  
Out of eyesight.  
This is what we live for,  
go out and explore!

# The Illustrator

Laura Stewart



*Haley Fisher*



# Late Night Radio

*JJ Sayers*

Because of you, I smoke lonely in the midst of late night radio  
The DJ's smooth voice is luring me to unconscious imaginations  
With every song he announces I slip slide slip from one awareness to another  
My eyes have convinced my eyelids to meet  
As they greet one another, I am slip slide slipping into bursts of fuzzy lights and easy-tempo bu bum  
bum ba da bum's  
Eruptions of vivid memories are plastered on the black canvas of my eyelids  
A cavalcade of images makes a collage of your face  
And oh, the sorrow in knowing my eyes will never again meet yours!  
Colors swirl into demented half truths  
Comforting but not comforting comforts  
Delusions of invincibility  
I am Megalomaniac, sitting in the dark as the DJ whispers half truths  
No longer are the words discernable from each other  
Clusters of pink sound gently waft against my skin  
The roll burns too close, my lips are burning  
I wonder what you are doing now  
Are you asleep at this late hour, dreaming of your future without me?  
You were always one to stay up late, is it possible you are sitting in the dark  
Smoking in the midst of late night radio as the DJ lures you to unconscious imaginations?  
And could you possibly, just maybe, be dreaming of me?  
I light another one  
Deep inhale, slow and smooth; Exhale, let the smoke roll from my mouth  
Vapors caress my face as I lean forward  
If only the poor woman beside me knew how often my thoughts wandered to you  
For twenty years I've cheated on her with thoughts of you  
Such a shame you had to go  
So I slip slide slip from one awareness to another  
Smoking in the midst of late night radio



# DRUMMER BABY

Kaitlynn Jensen

I throw myself into it, the sticks in my hands, gripping tight and never letting go. I start hard and fast, not letting anything break my stride. I beat the drums with all my might, all my heart, all my body's strength. I throw back my head, I let my hair down and let it fly around my face. I smash my head to the beat, beating my arms like wings as I smash and crash and pound the hard top of the drums. My head falls back, the snarl-balls in my hair twisting in the light, as if alive. I open my mouth and let out a scream, loud and heart filled, I scream out and I pound the drums. My hands ache, my

lungs burn, and my hair is sticking to me with sweat. I growl and snarl and beat my drums, hearing my heart beat beside them. The pounding never stops; its in my ears, my head, my heart. I roar and spit and nash my teeth, I beat the drums with all my might. The sweat beads off my body and bounces from the drums with every hit. I throw my head back and howl to the moon above me, my hair turning purple in the fresh dew light. I beat the drum loudly, one last time. Two beats slowly.. One last beat.. and when I stop, I can still hear the cries in my ears...



Kaitlynn Jensen

# scarlet

Laura Houlberg



i can see  
the veins that carve rivers  
through the white plains  
of your eyes  
occasionally, they pulse with  
anger  
and all i remember is a conversa-  
tion  
how empty a feeling to tell yourself  
"i told you so"  
my eyes are not the only pair i gaze  
into  
as i make a choice  
or pretend to  
an inverse spectrum of unclarity  
emerges from the cascades of your  
look  
rush into me  
frozen in icy tide  
and as the condensation gathers  
from the heat of my  
want  
and your water  
my breath  
on the glass  
our blood creates a common mirror  
  
i ran my fingers through your hair  
hot like fire  
or was it a dream?  
a scene i drew with a sweaty fin-  
gertip  
in the fog on the glass  
that seperates  
you from me  
me from you  
she  
spits fire as it flows from the crown

who understands self-loathing  
better than the self-sabotaging?

being close to mother  
provides green closure  
not to me  
i can feel my heart beat  
it is a coronary earth  
that our plasma feeds  
i bleed into the dirt  
my life producing pigment for the  
red roses  
whose petals  
will be sprinkled on the bed  
we bleed for boys  
inspiration for a kiss  
pressed onto the petals of a human  
bud

too long  
i've gone  
with staring at arteries  
not knowing why they course  
and longing to  
but there's a reason  
why fire burns  
and my blood recycles  
heart to fingertips  
because originality is dead  
our stories have all been told  
you are not new  
the red cells that appear at a wound  
i would rather bleed  
for with pain comes understanding  
and our blood creates a common  
mirror

# Free Finally

You watch me.

Take it down a little bit, you say as you  
bite your lip.

I can't remember the time when we were friends,  
now all it seems like sick revenge.

Holding your hand, my heart feels wrong,  
those signals are true,

I know this and so do you.

I open you and let myself in,

You allow me, your deepest sin.

Feel my soul surging through your veins,  
can't help how you're feeling now.

You're out of plans and the excuses are lame.

Time passes, life is spoken only through hushed voices.

Don't let him know I enjoy this.

Take that trigger and pull it.

By, Danielle Riley

Picture Credit:  
Ugur Yildiz

<http://desesign.deviantart.com/art/hold-my-hand-99431283>



# Perpetual Ice

The cold is all-consuming.	But now I can only sense the freeze.	I've lost any power I had in store.
It takes control of my entirety.		There aren't just shivers on the outside:
I do not dictate my actions,	There is no blanket for me,	I feel the ice deep down in my core.
The chill is what reigns over me.	No coat that can possibly warm.	
	Though I try again and again,	Wrap my arms around myself,
I remember a time-	I can't thaw the frost in the middle of this storm.	Try to bring back the heat.
Oh, let me go back, please-		I will keep trying to bring back the warmth.
When I had the command over myself,	Tonight is so bleak,	I can't let this cold be my defeat.

*Melissa Aust*

# Raindrops in Accord

Hear their tapping	All other sounds end	No lonesome note to be found
Each unique droplet	They listen closely	
Heartbeats of sound	To this new beat	The rain has always completed the score
Together and separate	Elements blending together flawlessly	They compose a new melody
Morphing into a new life	Independent yet all in one	Unheard and ignored by mankind
Then comes the wind	It is synchronicity in its most basic form	
It howls in harmony		But the rhythm still continues
Eager to add its say to the symphony	Together no piece is apart	As it always has and always will
The trees applaud the sound	No sound can be extracted from the orchestra	Tip, tap, tip, tap- forevermore
Adding their own key to the song		

He is a black  
hole, always  
drawing me in.  
He is human

# When the Smoke Clears

Madison Richardson

to my right.  
Finally. As  
I pump the  
gasoline into

nicotine. I am addicted. I want escape.

The predawn blue of the sky dulls the sickness. It is a chance for breaking away. I have a bag packed, hope hidden in a secret place. I am ready for hope to be more than just hope. My coffee fogs the window as I watch the sun crest the rim of the valley. It beckons to me. Today I leave.

I slip into the bedroom. I am a ghost. I can hardly bear the sound of my own breath. The room is dim, and I can smell last night's alcohol in the air, mixed with the stench of unwashed sheets and stale cigarettes. Papers are strewn across the floor, crunching under my feet. Creased and dirty, they become worthless. Then there are his pack-rat crap piles. Old CDs and papers and clothing and used paper plates and scraps of metal and plastic and cardboard: stacks of junk that brush the ceiling. This is the house of vices.

Andrew is asleep in the unmade bed. Or maybe he passed out. The likelihood is equal. His form is visible only by the glow seeping through the curtains; curtains which are so out of place in our grey world.

Thin and painted in orange flowers, I put them up the day I moved in. I was seventeen. A few months before then, when Andrew found me, I was completely wasted somewhere in downtown L.A., wallowing in a sea of disjointed dreams. I was job-less, cash-less and virtually friendless. Meeting him seemed like the first scratch of luck I had found in months of searching for acting gigs and crashing on the couches of people I didn't really know.

He patched me up and found me a job as a waitress. He let me stay in his apartment. He loved me. And I loved him back. A month or so passed like that but we just didn't have enough cash to survive in L.A. and sustain our addic-

tions. So together we moved out into the middle of nowhere. The Mojave Desert.

For five years I have stayed in this hell hole. I have put up with every get rich quick scheme, every sketchy "guest", every alcohol binge and every slap and punch. I have been broken and glued back together a million times. I've always been called stupid. But I am smart enough to know that I must leave.

I kneel in front of the closet. The stained shag carpet is scratchy against my exposed legs. Hidden in the gloom of the closet, surrounded by cardboard boxes, wasted shoes and worn clothing, I find my duffel bag. Dust clings to it, the black of the fabric leached to grey. When the bag is free from the rubble of our broken life, I float out of the bedroom on silent ballerina feet.

I can leave. I have to. The knob turns smoothly, a good sign, but the front door is heavy as it opens. I walk into the desert, my fingers clutched around the cold metal keys, biting into my fingers. Bright light stings my eyes. I fear that I cannot adjust to it. I get into the old blue Toyota anyway, fumbling as I try to slip the key into the ignition. Pulling out of the driveway, I take a deep breath. The car smells like smoke. . . and Andrew. The scent is sweet and muddy and it makes me smile for a moment. But I ache as I drive away.

The barren wasteland of rock and scrub passes me by. I hate it. Ugly and dead, it stares at me in a silent cry. I drown out the world with whinny music; it reminds me of the moon reflected on still water. Of bittersweet peace.

The gas tank is low.

I pray for a gas station to cross my path soon, or I might die in the afternoon heat waves. The sun is high in the blue sea of sky, and the thin air thickens with the heat.

Cresting the ridge, I see a gas station

the tank, breathing in the fumes, I stare out at a different world. Beyond the rim of the desert is a valley of green, of life, of hope. It is like rich food, making my trash accustomed stomach sick. I panic. I won't fit in. I will lose myself like I did all those years ago. I will never find a love that redeems my past. I will die. I climb back into my car and whip out of the station, burning stolen gas, my foot pressed hard against the pedal.

It is an hour or two before the old white house rises from the heat waves. I park and sit in the car for a moment. My body sinks into the seat cushion and the panic seeps out of me. The heat glares on my bronze skin. I feel it in my bones. I sigh, climb out of the car. My legs were stuck to the cracked leather and they make a suctioning sound when they are freed. Opening the front door, I realize that it is just as heavy going in as it is leaving.

Andrew is awake and he smirks when he sees me. "I thought you left," he says, taking a swig from a freshly opened vodka bottle.

"I did," I reply quietly, "but I came back."

"Missed me, huh?" he takes another drink.

"Mhmm. . ." I say as I look at him. He chuckles and pulls out a smoke and a lighter. Soon the air is muddy with the smell. He holds it out in an offering. I don't need one, though. My head is already thick with smoke.

He taps out the ashes, and then sighs weightily. With a hand around my waist, he kisses me hard. He does not look heartbroken, but I feel the pain smoldering in his kiss. I lean into the heat. His hand over my cheek, his eyes burning. . . they are pleas. I relent. I will stay.

But I will regret it, when the smoke clears.

# I Hear Tualatin Singin'

R  
a  
y  
  
R  
i  
c  
h  
a  
r  
d  
s

I hear Tualatin singin', the sound of many great voices blistering through the air,  
Those of Rosie and Flow, bellowing do the right thing,  
That of the choir, warming hearts all around as they sing,  
The shouts from the coaches, you can hear from the front door,  
As well as the beat of the break-dancers, as the glide across the floor,  
The cries of the cheerleaders, as they try out a new TuHS chant,  
Along with the heavy breathing of a cross-country runner, as like a dog, they start to pant,  
The football team's thunder can be heard cross-town,  
But so can the jokes of Mr. Jakubowski, making students laugh harder than a clown,  
The exciting buzz that surrounds Homecoming, as you dance the night away,  
But don't worry, you'll be tired all of the next day,  
Later on down the road comes the stressful week of finals, where the whole weeks time,  
You spend studying; it should be made a crime,  
Here in Tualatin, people take care with every stride,  
And live with a heart of black and blood of crimson, showing great pride.





# *Meursault and the Stranger*

David Shumway

The dawn came after all. I was sure it would; just as I was sure dawn would come again every morning after this for all the other people who were allowed to go on living, outside the prison walls.

The appeal was rejected; they came for me at dawn, to escort me to the guillotine waiting in the square. The van ride from the prison rattled and jarred me as it drove the old road out to the square. It occurred to me that I really was going to die today, and that there was nothing I could do to stop it. It didn't particularly matter to me; I had long ago consigned myself to this fate shared by every man on earth. It makes little difference, in my opinion, if a man lives to thirty or if he lives to a hundred.

Besides, it's common knowledge that life isn't worth living anyway.

After several moments the van arrived and several policemen escorted me out to the grim machine set to kill me discreetly and efficiently. When the doors opened, I was met with a harsh red glare from the morning sun. It blinded me and rendered me unable to properly survey the crowd that had gathered to watch my demise.

I peered through the searing red carefully, and soon I could see some of the people standing closest to the guillotine. Céleste was there, and Raymond, and the little robot woman. I did not see Marie.

I was disappointed. The spectators were few, and they were mostly silent. I had wanted very much to be met with hatred and cries of abhorrence during my execution. But no matter. I won't have to worry about it for long.

The policemen pushed me to my knees and readied me for the execution. They used a large gourd to test the machine. The blade sliced through it without hesitation, indifferent to the identity of its victim, be it a gourd or the neck of a man. In the guillotine I saw a sort of perfection I had never met with in this world before.

My neck was placed in the notch carefully reserved for it. The spectators, still silent, seemed to be regarding me with apathetic sympathy. The blade rose, and the hot sun glinted off its sharpened metal. A keen shaft of light bored into my eyes from the red glare overhead and the sheen of the blade. My forehead became covered with sweat, and a burning shaft of heat raked over my skin.

There was no point in dragging out my absurd life any longer. The blade fell.

All at once, the burning glare disappeared, and the execution square was doused in the shadow of twilight. The crowds, the police, and even the guillotine had gone somewhere I could not guess. I was sitting alone on the paving stones.

It was a queer feeling. I looked around myself, absorbing the details of the darkened square yet discerning nothing.

For some reason, my first thought was of the priest; a prison chaplain who insisted on wasting my last days discussing God. The priest had been genuinely disturbed by what I had told him, but it wasn't my fault he didn't understand. I was simply trying to tell him I had no interest in things I could not perceive, that whether I believed in something or not was of no importance to me.

I don't believe in an afterlife. This notion perturbed the priest, and thankfully he decided to leave me alone after that.

However, something about my current circumstance was irksome. Seemingly, I was executed by guillotine only moments before. Yet I was still conscious.

I ruled out the possibility that there was a malfunction, a loophole that allowed me to live. The guillotine is perfect; a flawless killing machine. No, there is some other explanation.

Perhaps, I told myself, I am experiencing no more than a strange mixture of chemicals concocted by my quickly dying brain. I was hallucinating.

I expected to lose consciousness and fade into non-being at any moment. There was nothing to be done about it. What I would have given to see Marie again! But everybody's life ends, and all I could do was sit here, alone, in semi-consciousness and wait for mine to run its course.

But I was not alone. At length, I perceived there was a stranger, a man, whom I could not see clearly, and had not seen before. Perhaps I did not look at my surroundings hard enough; perhaps I didn't care to.

He approached me. His voice was odd, yet familiar. When he spoke to me, he called me his "son."

"My son, your earthly suffering is over," he said sweetly.

I knew who the man reminded me of then; it was the priest. This irritated me, and I decided I wanted nothing to do with this stranger.

The man waited for several minutes, and then he saw that I was ignoring him.

"Come now, my son, why do you not wish to address me?"

I looked away, cursing my resilient consciousness. I only wished to be left alone to accept my fate. I had expected to be overtaken by oblivion by now. Instead, I was still here, being assaulted by an apparition that wished me to acknowledge it.

Having little other choice, I replied. "Please do not bother me. I am done with this meaningless world. I would like some peace before I die."

The man smiled. "My son, you are already dead. If you are still waiting for the curtain to fall, I fear you shall be sitting on your haunches for eternity. Come!" he said with a flourish, "there are greater things ahead, things that are still expected of you!"

“There is no such thing as eternity, and I don’t care about whatever your greater things may be.”

“But, my son...you are mistaken,” the man cried. “I am your father! Your maker! I know what troubles you have weathered! I have forgiven you, though you have doubted me. Now stand, my son, and follow behind. I shall take you to the Other Side! Return to the arms of God, and you will know peace, my son!”

There was silence as he stretched his arms in invitation. But I did not accept his offer. Instead, I began to howl with laughter. It was the most ridiculous thing I’d heard in my entire worthless existence.

“You expect me to believe you are God?” I screamed, calling him awful names and hurling insults into his outspread arms. “You expect me to believe all the arbitrary, meaningless lunacy that has befouled the world had a purpose? That it was preordained for me to shoot that Arab and be executed? That you, Almighty God, could have saved me from the guillotine and given me a happy life with Marie? You expect me to believe that prayers aren’t just worthless gusts of breath to the empty air?”

I paused and drew breath, trying to find the words to express what I was feeling.

“There is no God.” I said. “There is no meaning. People live and then die. Everyone has the same fate. Please stop wasting my time.”

The man’s expression grew dark. “So be it. You may stay mired in your ignorance forever, monsieur Meursault. I will leave you alone.”

I turned my back to him, not wishing to exchange another word. Through the corner of my eye, I watched the stranger leave, fading away into the background.

Once he was gone, I resumed waiting for my death.

I stared out into the blank twilight. My eyes fixed directly forward into the future, where I was sure an unambiguous end, a final lapse of being, awaited.

Any second now, I told myself, any second now...



*Eloise Loen*

We drove miles and miles into the country side  
To get you,  
You were worth every inch

I fell in love with your kindred spirit filled eyes,  
They get me every time

## Ode To A Beloved Pet

*Anonymous*

Coming home to see your cute face,  
Always so trusting and kind

When we go camping you snuggle up at night,  
And wake me with a cold nose

You're my super Sam,  
Jumping off the deck to chase a squirrel

For the pictures you so love being taken,  
To the many memories made

I will be eternally sad when all I have left is your  
memory

This is the end,  
All I have to say

I loved you once, I love you still,  
Always have , always will

**Vagabond Justice**

JJ Sayers

*Penned*

JJ Sayers

He writes with passion and with haste  
 Sword ripping 'cross the roughest paper  
 One million pages is but a taste  
 Thoughts lit, explode, by this word shaper

Pen filled with precious crimson scrawls swift upon his canvas  
 Love and hate and will and presence bleeding and unstoppered  
 Imbued with force the red sweeps forth, killing off the shameless  
 The script of Gods cannot be stopped, and never has it faltered

With mighty roars and tremulous sobs  
 Artist slashes at the earth  
 Knees give way but still he lobs  
 Striking ground which gave him birth

Poureth forth from crevices  
 Ink rages from his body  
 Unstitched come seams thru ravages  
 He knows not the ways of exody

Red impels reverberations flourishing to height  
 INK coagulates to furrowed stalk of timber  
 Emotion signatures constitute hybrid entities ignite  
 Soul and pen and earth fuse to bind the circumscriber

Cardinal grove hath taken root  
 Fruits of the pen grow ever more  
 One man's work possess all repute  
 Avatar entity is bound no more

I've freed myself  
 From your forced laws  
 Left the rest to whatever walls  
 They choose to imprison themselves with

The idea of established code  
 Laughable in attempts  
 To rein me in  
 Cannot achieve your lofty goal  
 Regulated Enforcement

Cast away are my shackles  
 Of judicial doctrines  
 Which seek to up seat me  
 From my comfortable perch

And yet  
 Though I shed myself of this uniform  
 Still I divulge in the presence  
 Of your subjects  
 Dancing naked amongst them  
 Chuckling at their bewilderment

I am rid of time and obligation  
 And thrive  
 Existing in exciting percussion  
 Crash clang bang catastrophe  
 Passionate rebellion

You hold me back  
 Where I would push onward  
 I am no slave  
 Do not pretend you're my master

I separate myself from you  
 Your law  
 And take up arms  
 With comrade circumstance  
 We shall discern the decrees  
 In our meanderings



In vagabond justice  
 Lies the freedom which  
 You silver tongues  
 Deny me  
 So I claim it



*Arisaday Mendoza*

## Photos

*Morgan Windhorn*

A picture is worth a thousand words,  
A stupid cliché that speaks the truth.  
Photos never tell a lie,  
The live on long after you die.

They capture a blimp in time,  
They show you every color and thread no matter how fine.  
We use them to help us not forget,  
Even when the moments are filled with regrets.

They are beautiful no matter what they portray,  
Even something as simple as clay.  
They are like snowflakes,  
Being different in every way.  
When you look at one and have nothing to say,  
You know that picture is here to stay.

Pick up a camera and record your life,  
You will never know what you could forget.

Aubrey Brown

**Waiting in the Girl's Bathroom**

*In line for the bathroom stall,  
Reading graffiti on the wall.*

*I need to pass some time*

*Make up some stupid funny rhyme*

*I need to go, you know I do,*

*Will you let me cut in front of you?*

*I'm beyond full like a water balloon.*

*This hurts so bad, I'm gonna burst soon.*

*My bladders turning into a punching bag,*

*Funny how time seems to drag.*

*Jittery and jumpy, I start to twitch.*

*I'll just go into the boys room, I'll make the switch.*

*Empty stalls and sinks galore,*

*I'll sneak out crawling on the bathroom floor.*

*Through this experience, one thing I have learned...*

*Nothin' risked, nothin' earned!*

# Innocence's

Anonymous

Sex, drugs, and alcohol  
You put high up on a wall  
Say it's not right for teens our age  
Yet we're old enough to earn a  
monthly wage

You say childhood is what we lack  
Yet when we fight for it you take it  
back  
Filling us with knowledge and  
teaching responsibility  
For the real world you are prepar-  
ing me

The choices I have to make you  
say aren't my own  
They won't be until I'm grown  
Please pick a side, just pick a team  
Because I'm tired of this in be-  
tween

With one foot in each door  
It leaves me reaching for so much  
more  
But I'll never know unless you let  
me try  
So unpin my wings and let me fly

Paige Peterson

