

High's

Publication

and Writing

THE PAW

Tualatin

Electronic

of Art



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Desiring Enigmas

I am wielder of words

and authority of articulation

I am eloquent employer of elaboration

My sweat is sticky with

slang

speech

style

I can readily refute your reasoning

and grasp your gist

¼è` Y00ãã` ÐãPãã0ã0ããè0

your timid. think. type.

My cranium is capacity for contemplation

subjects your scrutinizing to shame

But

regardless of how many circles

i can run around you

i will be courteous

because i'd rather run with you

than trip you up

live got laughter

that will lighten your load

and soften your sorrow

My gregarious grins

will diffuse your distemper

cause you casual comfort

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I can reverse your restlessness

and strip you of stress

with a simple smile

But

for all my joy

i will weep

every time your heart breaks

while picking up the pieces

to save them for tomorrow

I can never dictate all i am

in a single poem

After all

i am a lot of things

But

i promise to keep writing

until thoughts exceed language

-Smutao

INSIDE OF ME

BY: KAREN ORTIZ

I'm a loner in some days,
 somebody in others,
 You see my face,
 and see nothing in trace,
 You focus on my eyes,
 and see nothing inside,
 Look deeper if you dare to my heart,
 and you will see everything broken apart,
 See nothing on my skin,
 Cuz all the bruises are from within,
 My mind is an endless path,
 with no way out, or no aftermath,
 Deeper and deeper my thoughts bury me,
 Not able to see a way out,
 not even able to breathe,
 Screaming at the sound of my name,
 Searching through all the memories I made,
 Finding nothing in spite of myself,
 But the people that made me who I am,
 are all but pictures on a shelf

One Year More

By: Melissa Aust

Senioritis is a very serious disease
 With a cause that's not a joke, but more a tease.
 Each day going to school it gets more difficult to
 appease,
 Asking the question, "can I just graduate already,
 please?"

All the work, the college applications, the constant
 stress,
 And teachers repeatedly telling you they want you
 to impress;
 It's not that I want to fail, or that I don't hope to
 have success,
 But I have something I have to say, I just have to
 confess.

I admit that I am still young, and probably a little
 naïve,
 But I have more on my mind right now than what I
 want to achieve.
 This is not just about gaining freedom, or the op-
 portunity to leave,
 But it's hard to focus on school right now, more dif-
 ficult than you'd believe.

I'm not unhappy or ungrateful; please don't get me
 wrong,
 But I feel like being at school all day is not where I
 belong.
 I just feel like I'm always waiting, and it can be hard
 to get along
 Knowing my life is about to start, and to high
 school I'll say "so long!"

Senioritis is serious, like I said before,
 And it seems some days in high school I just have to
 ignore
 The building anxiety, wanting to fly away- to soar.
 Senioritis has me in its grip, whispering to me "just
 one year more."

Unbidden Seepage

screw you, sigmund freud
you and your noisome ideas

there was once a time when i could contain every thought
imprison them within my belly
hide them from the world and watch
as it stumbled blindly in my wake
searching for things i hid too well

there was once a time
when i could hold my tongue for months
silent and unknowable

but no longer!
no longer do my thoughts consist
of their once innate secrecy

i have been compromised

now, regardless of my fortitude
and unrelenting efforts
my great forge tends to tremble
my vault's door tends to unhinge
ever

so
briefly
and in this time
thoughts tend to slip

slip, freud
thoughts tend to slip

but never before my unfortunate eyes
surveyed your work

pored over your studies
it is as if your name and your ideas
are synonymous
with
slipping

and if my jaw does not crack
and my voice does not reveal me
my fingers ache
crack and contort
grasp at ticonderoga pencils
and begin to write off
my dearest

most confidential
most dangerous ponderings

and if my fingers do not ache
my face jumps
all too enthusiastically
at the slightest whim
unwitting traitor of flesh

and if my face does not jump
and abides by my stoic wishes
then surely my heart shall find itself
a freudian victim

thumping with such erratic vigor
it bursts
my blood
slipping
downhill
astonishingly shaping letters
of confession

~Smutao

Snow

Kaitlin Gattucio

i sit on the park bench at a
 light a cigarette and think
 myself lucky to be alive

two eyes stare into the great
 unknown
 one hand reaches out, white as
 bone

lord knows how you came into
 my heart
 impatiently i'll count the
 minutes we're apart

longing to feel your head
 resting on my shoulder
 i wait and wait, and slowly grow
 colder

the snow falls around me under
 the portland street lights
 lord knows how i hate these big
 city nights

i pull up my collar and shiver and
 shake
 how many more minutes could
 you take

Sometimes...

Gabby Marderosian

Sometimes all I can do is see.

Can't help, can't breathe, can't
 even pity.

All I get to do is watch helplessly.

Sometimes all I can do is feel.

Can't talk, can't breathe, can't
 think.

Can't hold my emotions.

Sometimes all I can do is laugh.

Can't stop, can't breathe,
 can't be angry.

All I get to do is smile wildly.

Sometimes all I can do is cry.

Can't see, can't feel, can't
 laugh.

All I get to do is wipe my eyes,
 and hope for tomorrow.

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*We no longer possess the capacity for remembering where we've come from
And recently the prospect of forgetting has caught up with us
The wildness of the jungle lives on only in our tales
Vibrant and intricate as the terrain we crossed in our search for the things we wish had remained wayward
Remedies to ailments which can be cured only with absolute sacrifice
And undue inhumanity*

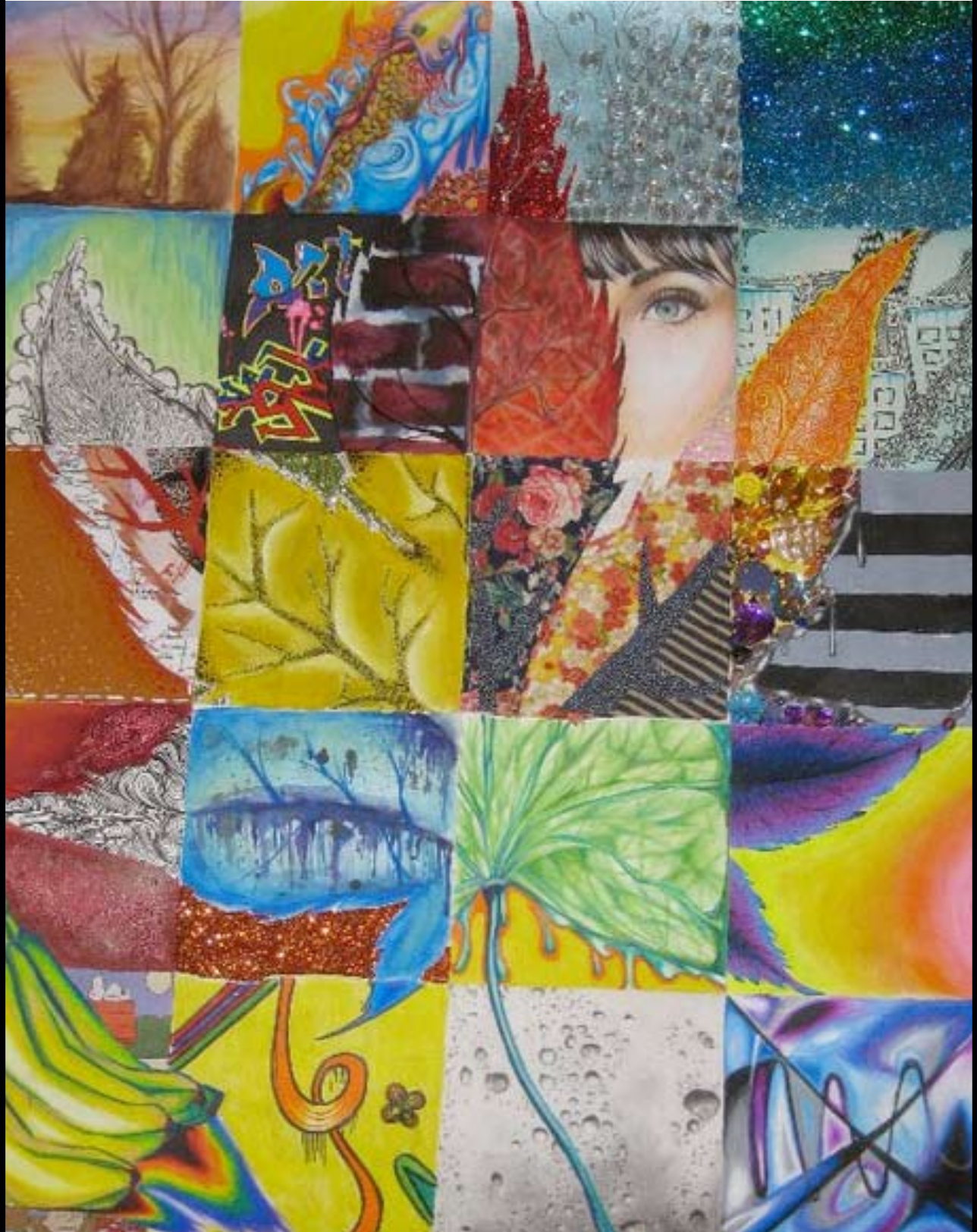
*In a pinnacle of delicious deliriousness verging on animal inebriation
Our most familiar celestial body lit the candles we've been breaking sticks over for decades
Who knew we were vampiric in nature
Someone ought to have told us the solutions would be grossly banal*

*We are the species of malfunctioning sewers
The stench of sickness hangs perpetually
Kinks in our processing exist deeper than what can be felt or heard or seen
Flecks of our plethoric diseases seep from unknown fractures in our bones
Toxicity escaping from its marrow in prison
Forcing osmosis on our organs
Permeating our pores
Assuming identities numbering in the millions
Eluding extinction with paranoid preparedness*

*When air born traces settle in our shit-sensitive nostrils
Hibernating synapses fire up
It's time to move, darling
this neighborhood is starting to reek with some quality, raunchy filth
about time to thrust ourselves into another niche
because maintenance of this habitat is too much of a fuckin chore
too damn expensive and much too covetous of time for our instant gratification needs*

(B)lissful

Ar(o)ma



Makenzie Horlings

MEMALOOSE SHOWDOWN

Robert Black

*I-84, ten miles west of
The Dalles, Oregon
1400 hours*

Johnson climbed the hill alongside the road. It would have been tough work for even the most experienced climber, but the suit made it easier. *Too easy*, he thought. He could, in theory, smash down the trees, but since they were to be their only cover he opted against that. Trenches at this stage and angle would be useless, and even though the suits could destroy the road to make trenches General Hanson had rejected that.

“AI, give me a location of the enemy front.”

“Yes sir.” a map appeared on his monitor. The Drantless were being funneled down the road and had, from the looks of it, sacked Mosier about an hour ago and were now entering Memaloose State Park.

“Okay, have all suits deploy camouflage and get into a position close to the road, but not too close; I don’t want anyone to be hit by artillery from the other side of the river.”

“Yes sir.” to the other soldiers nearby, the PCS troopers seemed to disappear; the camouflage system in the suit was much like that on the new tanks, where from no matter what direction the soldier was facing, or what angle they were looking from, there was no way to tell that there was a suit there. Even their guns

were camouflaged by the program.

For practical purposes, the suits canceled out the camouflage of the other suits.

“Collins, what are you doing?”

“I can’t get a clear shot at the road, sir; I have to move closer.”

“Use the targeting monitor to get the clear shots you want; I don’t want you to get so close they can pick you up and blow the rest of the unit’s cover.”

“Yes sir.”

“Sir,” his AI said “the artillery is in position and waiting for your call.”

“Good. We just have to wait, now.”

The humans’ style of combat never said anything about leading from the front, but Sorinalta-Leinar needed to make sure the other lords below him were able to execute their orders. He had scavenged the viewing monitors from a damaged transport, and had made a command post in this town that he had captured only a few hours ago, Mosier.

“My lord,” one of his lessers approached him “The figures you asked for.”

“Show them to me.” The lesser handed the figures to him. Currently, there were about fourteen thousand Drantless foot soldiers heading into this forest area, and rough estimations showed the

humans had only about one tenth the number of soldiers. The humans had no time to set up their usual defenses, obviously meaning that fleeing non-combatants could be just down the road.

“Should I move some of our air support to defeating these humans?” the lesser asked.

“There is no need; the humans in the south are in greater numbers, and I am guessing that their armored infantry is there, so there should not be much trouble from these lightly armored ones. Have the infantry lead the attack, since they do not seem to have any heavy vehicles.”

“Yes my lord.”

Actually, the humans had more troops than it appeared. This was due to the Marshal Personnel Carrier.

The M5A1 was the designation for the main vehicle that the Madelle gave to the humans. It was about the size of an Abrams, and about as fast, but it had more in common with the Bradley Armored Personnel Carrier than the tank. Its 50mm rail-gun had a faster rate-of-fire than a Bradley, and instead of TOW missiles it carried four missile launchers similar to the ones mounted on the Petraeus tanks. It could carry about thirty unarmored infantry, and the ten on the highway were fully loaded and ready.

Johnson spotted the

Drantless first. They were advancing slowly in their standard battle groups, with a Lower Battle Master in front of their fifty man columns. There were a few light and medium tanks, but they were in a position where they would not seriously hurt the defenders.

"I'm guessing there's about two thousand Drantless heading towards us right now?"

"Four thousand is a better estimate, sir." the AI said.

"Whatever. Alert the tanks and have the infantry inside them dismount." Johnson picked up his rifle from where he had set it against a tree and loaded a clip into it. He zoomed in on the lead Drantless, a Higher Battle Master who was probably a green commander from the looks of it. He had probably spent his time managing slave pits or build groups; occupations where the pay was good and the slaves did not shoot back. But a Battle Master was a Battle Master, and he signaled for any sharpshooters in the area to try and take him out as soon as the chaos of fighting began.

The first line of Marshals opened fire, the 50mm shells making short work of the unarmored Drantless. Startled, but not panicked, the aliens pulled into the forest, trying to get to cover as per their new training routines.

Right into the waiting PCS.

"All units drop camo." Johnson dropped to one knee and squeezed off four shots; they passed through the first few lessers and kept going, killing five more each before running out of energy. The Drantless were scared at the sudden appearance of these humans in the woods, armored humans none the less, and pulled back to the road, but since the Marshals were already grinding them up, they had only one direction to move: forward and outward.

Johnson and most of his other men held back, taking out key enemy soldiers from behind the cover of trees, while others leapt at the enemy soldiers with their Tarans. The Drantless Higher Battle Master was nowhere to be seen; his corpse was either being trampled underfoot by hundreds of slightly panicky lessers, or he was cowering behind some tree shouting out orders from a manual, if the Drantless even had a manual for when your command blows up in your face, literally.

Then the tanks came; Johnson had encountered type-1211s back on Carra-Dün and Titan, and unlike the light tanks with their fixed guns and the beam tanks with the massive recoil the mediums could do anything that a tank would be able to do, and to an experienced commander busting open PCS soldiers was easy

work. Currently, the Marshals had them distracted, but who knew how long that would last?

"Pyle, get over here." Johnson had designated Corporal Pyle the platoon's anti-tank specialist when he first took control. The actual military term was unimportant to him, especially in the heat of battle, so it was usually ignored. He was pretty good at taking out tanks with the missile launcher; anyone could do it with ease, but he had a knack for not only killing the tanks, but he could get a first shot kill against anything, even heavy tanks.

"Sir?" the corporal said.

"Take out the medium tank before we have as much in common as a lobster when it meets a hammer."

"The simile scares me, sir, but you've got your tank." Pyle got behind another tree and aimed the rocket launcher. Johnson killed any Drantless that got the idea that the missile was dangerous, even if most of them were already locked in a struggle with the regulars and other suits.

The launcher jerked back a little and a white streak materialized from the barrel and touched the tank, just below the turret. The tank blew up from the inside, obviously meaning the detonation on the missile was slow and it had punched through most of the armor beforehand. Most of it was strewn across the road, and there were a lot of

dead Drantless to add to the mess, one of which he could see was the commander of the frontal column.

“Nice work; a little sloppier than usual but nice overall.”

“Thank you, sir.” more tanks were arriving, and these were in a position where Pyle could not easily engage them from. They opened fire, and the result was almost instantaneous amongst the light infantry, with humans falling every time the close-in defenses swept across the wood line. The PCS were not affected as much, but that was because the cannons were busy firing on the Marshals.

A few depleted anti-matter bursts caught his attention; none of his men had Razors, and the infantry in the group certainly did not have access to that kind of equipment.

“AI, where’d those antimatter explosions come from?”

“Other units farther down; they have found a way to use missile launchers and Razors as improvised mortars, and due to the terrain the enemy tanks cannot take them out.”

“That sounds like a useful strategy; I’ll have to see how they do it.”

“The armored humans have returned?”

“Yes, my lord; there are only a few of them, but they appeared out of the woods. They have caused

massive damage to the forces that we have sent through to take this city they call ‘The Dalles’.”

“How bad?”

“Very bad, my lord; almost four Higher Battle Groups have fallen, not including fighting vehicles.”

“That’s what I get for, as the humans say ‘Scraping the Bottom of the Barrel’. What are our options?”

“We can try and press on to the next city, but losses from the fighting could reach the millions if we are not careful, worse if we do not get any air support, and the humans could easily repel our advance. We could pull back to here and wait for the humans to lessen their diligence, which could take awhile but it yields the best results. Or we could go on the defensive, fortify this town, and smash the possible human counter attack. This is hazardous, since it allows the humans time to build up, and if they do break through then they could take back a large portion of the lands we have here.”

“All these options are ones that I do not wish to take, yet I must choose. Send a runner and have all units fall back to the city.”

“That would take awhile for a runner to get there, my lord.” Sorinalta-Leinar looked back at the viewing monitor; the Drantless forces were being slaughtered by the humans, armored or not.

“Perhaps the time would mean more of the enemy will fall.”

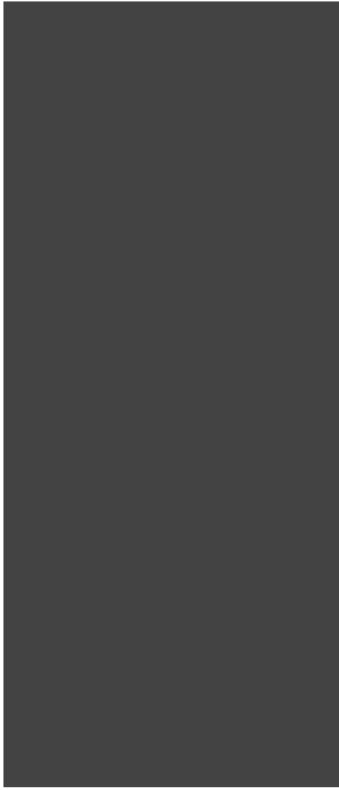
“I don’t get it; have the Drantless gone back to their old ways?” Johnson fired another burst into the enemy column. The enemy dead covered the ground, reminding him of several battles on Carra-Dün that he had the unfortunate pleasure of being in. Most of the suits had moved out of cover and were firing down the road at the massing enemy.

“They are scared, sir” his AI said “Their commander did not expect there to be PCS on this road, since most of them, including Major Sharon I might add, are down in the south.”

“Well, let’s make it so the Drantless never want to hear the word ‘Northwestern United States’ again; all artillery units open fire on the Drantless concentration and don’t stop firing unless it’s emotionally satisfying to you.” No sooner had the order went out that he heard the whistle that missiles from Leonidas Launchers made. The missiles hit the Drantless a few moments later, some of them even flying up from the force of the explosions. The artillery guns chimed in, and more death and destruction met Johnson’s eyes. A few small nuclear explosions, from hit energy cores for tanks, made it even more satisfying.

“Sir, the enemy appears to be in retreat.”

“That bought the guys in The Dalles some time.” He said “Let’s hope it holds.”



Makenzie Horlings





Kaitlin Gattucio



Hijab

Hanaa Masalmeh

The sun is a golden trophy in the sky, a testament to the fact there is no better place on Earth to be than here. The water is strewn with diamonds, and the verdant palm trees reach to the sky. This is quint-essential California, where the number one sport is tanning, and bikinis reign supreme. So why am I covered in head to toe, a tan line disaster waiting to happen? Because I am a hijabi.

A hijabi is someone who wears the hijab. Contrary to common belief, the hijab is not simply the headscarf that Muslim women wear; rather, it is the form of dress that must be followed. Because I am a Muslim, I have to follow this dress code. It means I have to cover everything but my face, hands, and feet, and avoid clothing that is too tight or see-through. All of this is dictated by my religion to protect my modesty.

The dictionary.com definition of modesty is: “regard for decency of behavior, speech, dress, etc.” In the real world, that is, minus the King James English, it means that I don’t draw unnecessary attention to myself. I don’t want people to judge me for what size of jeans I wear or how cute my hair looks or what kind of body I have. I want people to judge me by my character, how I treat people, and what I am like as a person. I don’t want my image to be dictated by what type of clothes I wear. I want it to be dictated by what kind of person I am.

Needless to say, my philosophy is not the norm, and it brings with it a multitude of questions. They range from “Can you take a shower in that?” to “Why do you wear that?” Although the answers might seem more than obvious to me (No, I don’t take a shower in my hijab. Would you take a shower in your clothes?), to others, it truly is perplexing. I have to remember that for some people, I am the only Muslim hijabi they’ve seen in their lives, and they will judge over one billion Muslims worldwide based on my actions alone.

The pressure can be overwhelming, from figuring out beach appropriate attire to carefully versing answers to awkward questions, I am representing my religion and my beliefs. They are what I live for, and although tan lines will fade, my conviction in my beliefs never will.



Gabby Marderosian

we've got lives to live and recklessness to uphold

come now, dear

I hear that generous abode on blind-eye avenue is fully equipped with a febreze enforced central air conditioning unit

Keeps the clean air and dumps our pollution on the neighbors

Guaranteed to keep the funk at bay for twice as long and better defend the assault on our senses

We can be blissfully ignorant throughout the kids' crucial developmental years

They'll love it here

We have reached a consensus

Challenging this behemoth miasma is not worth the eternal effort

We shall not give every precious potential memory to know a health that asymptotes our axis of comprehension

Rather, we shall wallow in a way that coaxes the swine's approval

And in those junctures of combative behavior we shall battle the radiation with chemical means

Of temporary relief via overwhelming deviation from empirical norms

Becoming renegades against contentedness, if only briefly

It is acceptable to us that we will never see one hundred thirty nine years

We hope to die holding a lover with one hand and taking drags with the other, of whatever

At the ripe old age of fifty two

Our blood pumps bursting with exertion in a grand climax of madness as we scream profanities and spew pseudo philosophies

There's no time left unused for healing

When we've so much living to do

~Smutao

The Valley of Fire

Robert Black

Higher Diviner Verris'altnar was furious. Velariss were known for their tempers, and he was no exception. His lobster-like claws were clenched together, to the point that if they had been human hands they would be "white knuckled", and even though they had no eyebrows the alien's face had obviously taken a darker tone.

"Curse these vile humans and their cowardly mode of war; curse them all to be crushed in the eternal abyss, and curse them to be picked apart by the souls of The Ancestors."

"O Great one," one of his lesser diviners said "The *Vessilas* will damn them soon enough, and when the end comes we shall watch them wither and seethe like worms."

"But they have strayed far from The Path, and something this severe need immediate punishment." The Velariss pulled down on a lever and pressed several buttons.

"I shall turn these humans into *Klak'tan*."

"We've got enemy airships en-route." Major Richardson switched to an overhead camera, provided by an orbiting destroyer. He counted four Velariss gunships, all of them heading down the valley towards the native village he had been ordered to defend.

"Have all non-combat-

ants evacuated and activate camouflage." The massive tank disappeared from view completely; even the sharp eyes of the enemy could not see him.

"Richardson, don't get yourself killed this time." His commander and friend, Brigadier General Joseph Mayfield, said over his Artificial Intelligence device.

"Fortunately, the radiation wasn't so bad the last time."

"Those turrets can easily rip open a tank, and they have about twice the armor as we're used to fighting."

"And they're weakest in the rear, I know; you gave us a big lecture about this stuff before we landed."

"Just making sure you weren't goofing off or something."

"General, I've been fighting in tanks since the Second World War; I think I would learn to listen when there are new enemies to fight." Richardson pulled the tank's targeting monitor over his head and waited. The first Velariss gunship rounded a bend and headed into the valley, followed closely by the other three. It was coming in at such an angle that had it not been for the tracking system the shot would have been impossible.

"AI, load antimatter set for airburst."

"When should I set the shell to detonate?" the small computer asked.

"Have it detonate inside the enemy ship."

"Yes sir." The Velariss had started firing on the regular soldiers and native warriors in the hills around the valley, with some results. Then the first one banked to the left slightly, and Richardson saw his opening.

"All units open fire."

This is going well, the Velariss thought. These humans are running from the guns of The Host as if they were pursued by demons, and those that do stand are no match for us.

His thoughts of flawless victory were dashed when the lead gunship shook and buckled from repeated hits. The gunship groaned and hurtled towards the ground and disintegrated on impact. The Velariss looked and saw ten of the humans ground based fighting machines that had appeared suddenly, as if from nowhere.

"Damn these humans; crush them."

Fighting a Velariss gunship with an M3A2 Petraeus was like fighting a tiger when armed only with a hunting knife; it was possible, but extremely dangerous. Even though it was designed for air-to-air combat, the ship still had six 400mm cannons in two turrets on its underside, not including those on top. These cannons could easily punch through the tank's armor, whereas the

200mm railgun of the human vehicle had some difficulty penetrating the airship, unless it hit in one of the ship's weak spots, like its engines, or was fired from point-blank range.

After they had brought down the first ship, Richardson's strategy went from "Hold position and fire" to "Run like Hell". He turned the tank left just as the hill he was on was blown apart by gunfire from the second gunship. He shot at the gunship again, watching with disappointment as the shell bounced off the side. The secondary and light anti-air weapons opened fire, but they were not enough to hurt the tank.

"General? Requesting air support." He said.

"Why? You seem to be doing okay." A female voice said.

"Sharon, where are you?"

"Well, you almost ran me over back there."

"Sorry, forgot about the stealth programs that the suits have. You wouldn't happen to be carrying any heavy weapons, would you?"

"Nothing to hurt gunships, but we could distract them for a little bit."

"Moot Point, Sharon," Mayfield said "We've got enemy infantry advancing up the valley; I could drop a nuke on their head, but the gunships are blocking my arc of fire and I don't think the natives would be too appreciative about us slagging one of their most sacred places."

"Don't worry, sir," Major Johnson said "We can handle a few thousand enemy soldiers."

"Good man."

Twelfth Corps consisted of all the remaining PCS troopers after the fallout from the destruction of Earth by madmen claiming to be God. Sharon Michaels had formed it after being promoted to Brigadier General, and seeing as how staff work was out of the question for her the men under her command were glad she fought with them at the front.

Sharon, followed by her friend Major Johnson, took position underneath the Velarishsh gunships, more importantly out of reach from their turreted guns.

"Two thousand enemy warriors coming at us, with about twice that many Sentinels, ma'am." Johnson said.

"Have they spotted us?"

"I don't think so." Sharon picked up her Razor minigun and moved closer. The Velarishsh were searching for anyone that survived the initial bombardment from the gunships before the tanks drew their fire. She waited until one of the lead Velarishsh, one of the centaur-like Sentinels, was within range and took up most of her targeting monitor.

"All units drop camo and open fire."

"Curse these humans;

curse them all" the Velarishsh Higher Diviner saw the enemy warriors materialize from beneath the gunships, out of reach of his ship's cannons. He could not maneuver to kill the warriors, less he expose himself to the human fighting machines that were now widely spread out.

Still, it was The Host that was getting slaughtered, and in a dishonorable way at that.

"Increase speed and attack the human machines head on."

"They've sped up." Richardson was having a hard time as it was trying to outmaneuver the gunships without hitting the PCS, but now that the gunships had sped up he had to risk that even more.

Anne's Revenge banked to the left and he fired another shell at the ship's starboard hull cannons. The shell blasted away some of the thick armored plating but otherwise did nothing but draw their fire. He turned into his attacker and watched as yet another hill was torn apart by six 400mm cannons. He switched his viewing monitor to see what was behind him, and all he could see was the grey image of the second gunship.

He swung the turret around and fired every heavy weapon the tank had at the gunship; sixteen missiles and two antimatter shells hit the ship almost instantaneously.

The first antimatter shell did not breach the armor, but the second one smashed the bridge and scorched the first turret. The gunship spiraled out of control and crashed amongst a thick grove of trees.

That left one more, in the middle of the valley.

“We’ve been spotted. Run!” Sharon and the PCS scattered as soon as the Velarishsh came around and fired. Although the shells were not nuclear, she instinctively leapt and curled herself into a ball and waited for the shockwave to hit her. When it did hit her, it sent her skipping across the ground like a stone.

She regained her balance, straightened out her legs, and aimed for a Velarishsh warrior. Her metal boots impacted with the crab-like head of the alien with a sickening crunch. She got up and looked around at the angry Velarishsh that were surrounding her.

She flicked her wrist and a modified Taran, a short sword made out of a material called Rylithium that could be filed down to one molecule of thickness, shot out of a compartment in her wrist. She swung her arm around and sliced the arm off the first Velarishsh, sending it away squealing. She grabbed a Sentinel by what she presumed was its throat and slammed her sword into its chest several times before tossing the alien over her head. She leapt into the air and split a warrior down the middle, then

smashed another with a kick to the chest.

One of the Velarishsh snapped at her with its claws. She dodged and crushed the pincer with her free hand, then hurled the Velarishsh over her head like it was a toy. She spun around and sliced another open with her sword and was about to kill yet another unlucky enemy when there was a horrific explosion; all the remaining tanks had opened fire on the gunship, and the combined fire threw the ship off balance. When it tried to regain balance, it caught fire and exploded, huge chunks of metal hurtling towards the ground.

Some of them were heading straight towards her.

“Run! That ship’s coming down on us!” she did not really need to run; the suits were tough enough to withstand ships crashing on them, but she was not in the mood to spend precious minutes digging herself out of the ground. She started sprinting away from the falling ships, dodging parts of the wreckage as she went. The ship slammed into the ground and exploded, and soon there was an unnatural calm on the battlefield.

“Anyone who’s not dead, sound off.” She said. It was more humorous than serious, considering she knew all her men were still alive and only a few had not made it clear when the ship hit and were now trying to dig themselves out.

“Ma’am, are you alright?” Johnson asked.

“Yeah, I’m fine, Johnson; I’m just... Johnson, what happened to you?” Johnson was covered from head to toe in blue Velarishsh blood and looked like he had just come out of a meat grinder.

“When you told us to run the first time I did... right into a pack of Sentinels. Literally, I might add.” He looked down at himself and sighed “Victoria’s going to kill me.” He said jokingly.

“She’s your wife, not your laundress, and it’ll wash off anyway. Come, we’ve got bigger problems to worry about.”

“What?”

“Not only the Velarishsh push-on, but I have to explain to the local chief why I just torched several hundred acres of sacred land.”

End

Scars

David Rios

The first scar always hurts the most
 From the scrape on your knee
 To the empty spot in your heart
 But tell me why
 Why does it hurt
 Why can't anyone numb the pain
 All you can see is their faces
 Each a different scar
 Each a different time and place
 And that one face
 The one that made the biggest scar
 The one face that made you feel nothing
 but pain for weeks
 Till finally you wake
 Your scars healed
 But still there
 You look over at her
 She looks back with those big bright, brown
 eyes
 And smiles
 She will never see all those scars
 But you know if anything ever happened
 to her
 That scar would hurt the most
 And worst of all
 It will never heal

entitled: you may mis-
 take this for an indirect
 love letter"

Anonymous
 he has often heard the cliché
 "i cannot explain why
 i love you"
 he cannot empathize with this
 because he knows exactly why
 he loves her
 his Love for her
 has no interest in how lovely her
 body is
 It knows not the lust
 nor the hunger for her flesh
 his Love does not particularly care
 for her gender
 but his Love is none the less
 a ravenous one

It yearns immensely to touch the
 intangible
 To caress the ethereal
 and so great is Its desire
 to see beyond perception
 It would readily perform a Heroes
 lobotomy
 if only television
 were more realistic
 he knows his Love cannot capture
 her every thought
 in a 64 oz pepsi cup
 and a shiny ticonderoga pencil
 but It reminds him
 that the world was once known
 to be flat
 the boogey man once hid
 beneath his bed
 and a deified superman once
 watched
 from above

so It keeps trying anyway

Mystery Man

this
is a love poem
for a man i dare not name
for fear the letters
will be sewn into his spine
down his thighs
along his abdomen
across his forehead

seeped into his bloodstream
carved upon his ass
stamped beneath him
on his sole
branded inside him
on his soul

because the nature of names
is terrifying to behold

absolute
undeniable
irrevocable

this
is a love poem
for a man i dare not name
for fear i will know him
completely
without exception of
character
thought
emotion

an appellation is
an appellation
regards of how many times
i might attempt
to retrace the title

the best i could achieve
is pseudonym
and that
is not good enough

i may rearrange the letters
as often as i desire
tear the stitches from his body
drain the labels from his bloodstream
polish his ass
chop off his feet
empty his soul

but he will remain himself
mutilated
dying
but the same

and i would be stuck with him

so
this
is a love poem
for a man i dare not name
for fear my dictations shall ruin him

~Smutao