



**AND**



**WHY I LIKE IT:** *Fiction Editor JOEY CRUSE writes...*

*Russ Doherty's, "Love & War," is a class on control and pace, an enjoyable class.*

*Like J. Robert Lennon, there is a breath and movement on the page that comes from walking with your life. There is something somber in the lines that exist outside of the subject matter. There is a sense of love and care for the time period and the culture and anxiety that Doherty paints as his backdrop.*

*Stuck in love with a girl he can't have, Paddy is an orphan in Chicago during the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. About to be kicked out of the orphanage for lack of funding and, within the same week, lose his job due to seasonal practices, our protagonist faces what to do about being drafted to Vietnam or, more so, how the fuck does one not go to Vietnam?*

*What I think is most interesting about, "Love & War," is the way in which it enriches the old tale of the soldier love story and the fear of war compounded with the harsh realities of war and life and subsequent disillusion, and that takes what I like to think is skill. There is an ennui that you can feel, there is sense of calm knowing your in good hands as you read the line, there is a sense*

*of longing for what could be, there is a contemporary comparison to be made for our current sense of cultural spirit, and there is good work to be read here.*

*Enjoy.*

### **QUALITY QUOTABLES** *(for the love of language...)*

Tests don't give me trouble and I'm good at math, so I don't tense up. He says I have an hour and points to the clock on the wall. When he leaves I page through the test booklet first and almost start laughing. There are no higher math problems, only multiplication and division, some basic logic problems, reading comprehension paragraphs, and puzzles. A sixth grader could pass it. I'm through in twenty minutes, and I don't think I missed one question. When I go out to the recruiter, he's reading Look magazine, which is mostly pictures.

Maybe I should be grateful. At least the orphanage cured my physical sickness, whatever it actually was. Regular food, a normal routine, and school every day was such a shock to my system that my chest and lungs finally started behaving. No more coughing up blood, being out of breath, lightheaded. The doctor couldn't figure out what happened. The teachers were amazed I could read as well as I did. I told them that's all I did for years when I was in bed sick. I read way above my grade. The schoolwork was easy, but the other kids always wanted to fight, especially when I showed them up. I had to learn to be invisible.

## **LOVE & WAR**

by

*Russ Doherty*

My draft notice arrives on a Tuesday in late August. The Selective Service Board orders me to report in three weeks. My gut seizes up, and it takes about an hour for the next ten minutes to go by. My life is over if I don't get a deferment. But only rich boys get deferments: for college, flat feet, or children. Everyone else gets shafted, ending up in Vietnam. Some come back in coffins.

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It's now Wednesday night. I've told no one about being drafted. Before work this morning Mr. W., the boys' counselor, disowned me, telling me I have to move out in five days. He said, "Your state funding wasn't renewed; you can't live here anymore." The orphanage has been my home for the last two years, and I have nowhere to go. I'm banished.

On opposite sides of me are Fahey on bass and long-haired Vertucci on guitar. I'm the drummer. Only, I can't wrap my mind around playing music right now. All my thoughts are on my nonexistent future. We're in the orphanage rec room on Mozart Street, and our rehearsal keeps getting interrupted. First, we see on TV that downtown Chicago has exploded. Some group called Yippies, protesting the war at the Democratic National Convention, has been tear-gassed by police. Then Janice, who delivers the mail, brings me a letter that rips me apart as I read it.

Fahey asks, "Paddy, what's wrong? You look like you just got punched."

"My ex-girlfriend, Greenie, had a baby girl and got married. I've heard nothing from her for two years, and now this." Why did she wait so long?

Vertucci laughs at me. "You should celebrate. It's not your kid. You dodged a bullet."

"I told her I'd take care of her. I didn't want to dodge anything. I wanted that bullet." Why did I say that? I can barely care for myself. But at least I'd have Greenie, and a deferment.

Vertucci and Fahey look at each other. Vertucci squints and says, "Sorry."

Fahey is ginger-Irish and only cares about music. "Can we get back to rehearsing?"

Every minute my gut burns with want. I want Greenie. I want a family. I don't wanna be drafted. But I've got no money, and I'm being evicted. Calm down. If I've learned anything from being an orphan, it's that whenever I push it, things blow up in my face.

In walks Mr. W., wearing the usual button-down striped shirt, his few wisps of hair combed over. He doesn't look happy. "All right, Paddy, any luck finding a room yet?"

I'm so frustrated. "Is that a joke? You just told me this morning I'm kicked out of here. Hell, I can't even afford a dollar-a-day flophouse. I'm not gonna go live in some shithole."

"Then you shouldn't be dicking around here playing music," Mr. W. says.

"You told us this was a good thing," I say. "You were the one who said we should combine our same interests so we don't feel alone in the world. We all joined band at school, learned our instruments, and now we got us our own group." I wanna scream at him: And I just graduated, and I had no money for prom, and I got no parents and no prospects. What the hell do you expect me to do? Control your breathing; control your fear. "I just got my draft notice."

Everyone reacts. Fahey says, "Holy shit."

Vertucci says, "You're toast."

Mr. W. says, "I'm sorry for you. Yet...that could be the solution. Maybe you should think about enlisting so you can manage what happens. You're smart. It's only a trade-off, a couple years of military time, then the GI Bill and free college. That's how I got my degree."

"No way am I going to Vietnam." There's no good choices in front of me. "And my stupid summer job at the twist drill factory ends on Friday. I can't believe this shit. I'm losing my room and my job in the same week."

"You know the Army has jobs that aren't in Vietnam: music and electronics and stuff."

I hadn't thought of that.

Mr. W. glares at me like he expects me to understand life. He leaves.

Vertucci says, "That sucks."

"I'm screwed," I say. "If I don't find a job in the next week, I'm gonna be on the street before I even get called up. Let's practice." Anything to take my mind off the pain and the worry.

We slide into "Satisfaction" by the Stones. It sounds way too clean and polite, no distortion, not nearly dirty and raunchy enough for a Stones song. This band is never gonna get hired. I gotta make a decision.

Later, in my room, lying on my bed, I wonder about Greenie's letter.

We met at age twelve, and I fell in love. Now we're both eighteen. In her letter she says she's known all along that I was here at the orphanage. But she also knew we couldn't make it work as a couple of teenagers trying to raise a baby. Maybe that's why she waited until she married to write me, hoping I'd forgive her and accept what had to happen.

She did what she thought best. And the heartbreak that I thought I could bury blows

through my brain again. I think about what she wrote and decide I can't give up on her. There's something about her letter, something between the lines, almost like she's asking for help.

I get up, look for Janice, and show her the letter. She reads through and hands it back. "I don't agree that she's asking for help. But she didn't say not to contact her, so maybe..."

"There's no address or phone number. I need to find her. Can you help?"

She thinks. "Maybe if I comb through the orphanage records I can find something."

Before I fall asleep, I think about what Mr. W. said. It's not a bad idea to find out my draft options. I know I want a college education. What I don't know is what I'm willing to trade for it. But I'm certain that chancing death in Vietnam is not an option.

Four days left before I have to leave the orphanage.

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Thursday I skip lunch and go to the Army Recruiting Office on Lincoln Avenue. I tell myself I'll do anything, so long as I don't have to kill anyone or be killed myself.

The recruiting sergeant—severe crew-cut and starched uniform—says there are electronic school options, and he'll discuss them with me. However, the Army has enough drummers right now, so music's not possible for me.

“The electronic schools require almost a year of training, which means you have to serve two more years after you graduate. Three years total. You earn one month of college on the GI Bill for each month you serve. Three years is thirty-six months. That'll get you four years of college.”

So there's the trade-off—three years in another institution. I breathe deep and nod yes.

“Okay. The best option is the Nike missile system. There are none in Vietnam, only Hawaii, Alaska, North America, and Germany. I can only guarantee you working on the missile system; I can't guarantee where you'll be stationed. And that's if you pass the entrance exam and make it through the eleven-month electronics school.”

“Hawaii and North America sound good to me,” I say. Germany doesn't seem terrible. Alaska sounds cold. Still... “Seventy-five percent chance of staying in the States. I like those odds. So, yeah, I'll take the exam.”

He says he can recommend a couple of books to study before I take the test.

“No, I'll take it now. I need to enlist right away.” I'm sweating.

“You can defer your starting date up to ninety days.”

“That's cool, but I can't stay at the orphanage past Monday.” I can't believe I'm going forward with this. Though it's not like I have a choice. Particles of dust float in the light from the door glass.

“You sure you want to take the test now?” One eyebrow goes up.

“Can I take it again if I fail?”

“You don’t want to waste my time. So if you’re close to passing and you agree to go home and study if you fail, yeah, you could take it again tomorrow.”

“Okay.” His office smells of cigarette smoke.

He puts me in a room with a window so he can watch me. There’s no phone, no one else in the room, and I have no clue what’s on the test. How could I possibly cheat?

Tests don’t give me trouble and I’m good at math, so I don’t tense up. He says I have an hour and points to the clock on the wall. When he leaves I page through the test booklet first and almost start laughing. There are no higher math problems, only multiplication and division, some basic logic problems, reading comprehension paragraphs, and puzzles. A sixth grader could pass it. I’m through in twenty minutes, and I don’t think I missed one question. When I go out to the recruiter, he’s reading *Look* magazine, which is mostly pictures.

He says, “Too tough for you? That’s too bad, kid.” He gives me an “I’m sorry” look.

“Nope, I’m finished. It was pretty easy.” I hope all of the Army is this simple.

He looks skeptical and grabs a binder that appears to hold the answer templates for all the various entrance exams. He looks through and pulls a template out, then looks again at me. “The moment of truth.” Like this is a detective story.

As he goes through the booklet, his face darkens with each page he turns. He makes no marks in the booklet. At the end he looks up at me. “Did you cheat?”

Unbelievable. Algebra was tougher than anything that was on that test. He must not have gotten very far in high school. “No, sir. How could I cheat?”

“You didn’t miss one question. Who gave you the answers?”

“No one. I’m just good at math and reading. That test wasn’t hard.”

He takes a deep breath and thinks what to say. “If you cheated and I sign you up and you can’t keep up with your class, then you’re a washout and you get sent to AIT—Advanced Infantry Training. Your next stop’ll be Vietnam. Only then you’ll have three years to go instead of two. So it’s your ass if you’re lying and you fail to graduate.”

Wow. Guys must be really desperate if they’re cheating on this test. “I’m not lying.”

“Okay.” And we go through the enlistment paperwork. I choose the day I’m kicked out of the orphanage—this coming Monday—as my enlistment date. I sign the contract and take the Oath of Enlistment. He tells me there’s no going back now. If I don’t show on Monday, I’ll be

arrested for being AWOL.

There goes my life. Without Greenie, what does it matter? She found somebody else. I don't want to think about it. I need to disappear. I go back to work.

That night I tell Vertucci and Fahey the band is over, I enlisted, and I'm leaving Chicago. They're not happy. Wait till they get drafted; then they'll know unhappiness.

Afterward, in my room, I feel some sense of closure. At least I know I'll have a bed and a paycheck for the next three years.

Every day at the orphanage, you hear kids talk about where they came from, as if that's going to solve anything. We wouldn't be here if we had somewhere else to go, no matter what our backstory is. I came from nothing, so I close my ears to all that whining. The only person I can count on is myself. And now I know where I'm going.

Maybe I should be grateful. At least the orphanage cured my physical sickness, whatever it actually was. Regular food, a normal routine, and school every day was such a shock to my system that my chest and lungs finally started behaving. No more coughing up blood, being out of breath, lightheaded. The doctor couldn't figure out what happened. The teachers were amazed I could read as well as I did. I told them that's all I did for years when I was in bed sick. I read way above my grade. The schoolwork was easy, but the other kids always wanted to fight, especially when I showed them up. I had to learn to be invisible.

When I originally arrived at the orphanage, I just wanted to get things right for once, to know I hadn't screwed up again. I never felt more alone, less worthy, than I did on that first night. When I lay down in bed, I curled into a ball and cried my eyes out.

I don't think I've cried since.

Three days left.

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Friday, my last day at Chicago Twist Drill, I'm heading for lunch when I hear a noise. Across the alley, clutching a doctor's bag, a sweaty teamster slinks down the fire escape, heels clinking on the metal steps. Older toughs like him—fedora, beer belly, black suit, and shiny shoes—come out of the union hall over there all the time. Why is this one using the fire escape?

The teamster spots me staring at him from the loading dock. As he stops and sizes me up, I turn and head to the deli, pretending everything is normal here on Skid Row. There's the bald wino singing weirdly off-key, the scraggly bearded guy sitting in an empty cardboard box, and of course a fake teamster-doctor making house calls using the fire escape. When I sneak a look, he's hurrying toward a glossy black Chrysler in the dirt lot.

Christ on a bike, it's hot. I'm so happy the deli has AC when I walk in, steering between workers and winos. Grabbing a tuna sandwich, potato chips, and an Orange Nehi, I head to the back register. Just as I'm paying, the front windows explode inward, and I'm knocked against the



counter and to the floor. A screeching agony fills my ears, and my kneecap feels like an elephant kicked me. Then the air gets sucked into silence, and everything goes black.

When I come to, it's ghostly quiet. I'm on my back, like a dying beetle. I grab my throbbing knee as my head spins. Next to me a guy holds his face, and blood flows between his fingers. The floor is littered with bodies, sandwich meat, pickles, and broken white ceiling tile. What the hell just happened?

The sound roars back on with screams and moans. Pushing to get up, I limp over people crying, elbowing, slipping on broken glass and spilled soda. Guys are bent on the floor,

immobile. A clerk shouts, "Help," into a broken phone. Finally I'm back out into the alley, safe.

Only not. The alley world slows to half speed, like a smoke-filled ballet on TV. People slog as if they're underwater, punched in their powder-white faces with tear tracks, dusty suits, splattered hats and work overalls, all staring upward. I can hardly swallow. A cloud of ash and debris fills the sky as this surreal green rain of thousands of gently falling dollar bills comes drifting down. A money shower.

The scraggly bearded guy stumbles in circles, grabbing at dollar bills. "Mine, mine."

A dazed cop trips on a beer bottle and yells, "Don't touch anything; it's evidence."

I push past them up the alley to the dirt lot. The teamster and his car are in pieces all over the alley. The burning Chrysler has been blown into fragments—the hood is on the second-floor fire escape landing, half a shoe in the weeds, broken glass everywhere. I'm gulping air in. It's like some combat photo from Vietnam. My body shivers in the heat as I pull my shirt tighter across my chest.

I'm lucky I was in the deli when that car exploded; otherwise, I'd be splattered too. My feet crunch on the gravel. I realize I'm still holding my lunch bag. The biting air stinks: chemical sweet and scorched rubber.

Why that teamster? He sure pissed somebody off. You always hear rumors about the Mafia, but you never expect to see death. My eyes dart everywhere at once.

A small metal box lies in the cinders; foot long, couple of inches deep. It's smoking—it looks important.

The cop is looking the other way. So I pick up the box, holding it with the paper from my lunch bag, but it's too hot. I quick-limp around the front of the warehouse to my delivery truck, open the driver's door, and throw it on the floor mat.

No one's in the front of the warehouse. They must all be in the alley looking at the bombed-out car. My ears whoosh as my knee pounds like a bass drum. The day seemed normal until a few minutes ago. That teamster looked fat and happy. Now he's toast.

They say dying is nothingness, a void you're not conscious of. No one's come back from the dead to explain. But getting blown to hell sure seems like you'd be on your way to the void.

Grabbing a rag and a screwdriver from the glove compartment, I jimmy the top off the box. There's a manila envelope stuck inside. I quick glance in the envelope, and—holy crap—it's cash, bunches of dollars paper-clipped to sheets of paper with numbers on them. What a day I walked into. I slam the box-top down and push it under the seat, with the screwdriver and the rag. Think.

Whose money is it? It's probably stolen. I could really use that money. What if someone comes looking for the money, for me? Nothing makes sense. My ears ping like a teaspoon being tapped on a water glass.

The evidence needs to disappear. I go back inside, leave a note for my boss, telling him I've gone on my delivery route, and I take off.

The last delivery is up Lincoln Avenue on the north side. Afterward, I head west on Irving Park Road, stopping at the A&P and a Sinclair gas station, tossing the box in one dumpster and the paperwork in another. Then I count the money. It's \$657, way more than I've ever had. But what use is it?

I might've had a chance of staying out of the Army with this extra cash if I enrolled in college. Except yesterday I took the Oath of Enlistment and signed a the oath of Enlistment and signed a three year contract. I'm so late to the party. I return to work, pick up my final forty dollars, stuff it in my back pocket with the rest of the cash, and say goodbye. No more summer job. Life sucks.

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The orphanage is quiet at dinner. I don't know where Vertucci and Fahey are. Janice finds me eating tasteless meat loaf with potatoes and hands me a slip of paper with an address.

She says, "That's where Greenie moved right after she had the baby. This woman, Mrs. Cartwright, might know where she's living now."

It's only two bus rides away. I'm out the door.

An orange sunset shimmers through the bus window. As my shirt sticks to the plastic seat, one fact sticks in my mind: Greenie had two years to contact me and didn't. What do I say?

The apartment is on the second floor of a redbrick, four-story walk-up just off Milwaukee Avenue, up from the White Castle burger joint. It's got a fire escape in front and wooden stairs in the back. Ringing the Cartwright doorbell, I wonder if anyone's home. The door buzzes me in, and I limp up the stairs.

An older woman's voice says, "Who is it?"

“My name’s Paddy, and I’m looking for a friend of mine, named Greenie.” I’m talking as I look upward. I spot the woman leaning over the second-floor railing. She looks nice, only she has blue hair. “Are you Mrs. Cartwright? I’m told Greenie stayed with you after the baby was born.” She reminds me of the older women who attend Sunday services.

“Yes. Unfortunately, Mary Ann Green is not here. How do you know her?”

Thinking quickly, I decide to lie. “We were at the orphanage together.”

“The baby is not yours then?”

“Uh...no, it was her foster dad’s.”

She brings her hand to her mouth, and her eyes go wide. I shouldn’t have said that. She mustn’t have known.

I say, “I was told she probably wouldn’t be here because she got married. Who did she marry?”

“It’s what I do, you see. Get the girls a good match so they have a partner to help raise the child. It’s hard for them to make it on their own.”

I nod my head. “I thought maybe you’d know where she moved to. I’m leaving for the Army on Monday. I just want to say goodbye.”

She hesitates. “Byron and Western, just down from Martha Washington hospital.”

It’s only one more bus ride away. “Do you have the actual address?” I’m now level with her on the second-floor landing. She’s tiny and smiles up at me.

“No, it’s right on the corner. You shouldn’t have a problem finding it. The husband’s name is Kilimnik.”

“What kind of name is Kilimnik?”

“He’s Ukrainian.” She bites her lip. “Sometimes I have to find a man who wants to be a citizen. Not many men agree to raise another man’s child. He’s older. Don’t be surprised.”

Not good. I thank her and head down the stairs.

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There are two apartment buildings on opposite corners of Byron and Western. Both look identical to the one I just left. The first building has no Kilimnik; the second one does, but pushing the doorbell has no effect. The front door stays locked. The name tag shows they’re in

basement apartment number two. I walk around the back and down the rotting staircase. There aren't any numbers on the basement doors, so I knock on the first one.

The door opens and Greenie stands there, her gorgeous auburn hair curling down her back, with her daughter. Greenie's the same girl I remember, but the light is gone from her eyes. She says, "Oh Jesus, Paddy, I should've known you'd show up. You can't be here. It's not safe."

I can't scold her about the past. "I love you. But I was drafted. I go into the Army on Monday. I had to say goodbye and see if you needed any help. What's her name?" I point.

The daughter is as beautiful as her mother.

"Erin." Greenie's eyes are wide. "And be quiet. If my husband finds you here, he could dump me back out on the street."

There's an undercurrent of fear; she's leaving something out.

"Who's here?" A loud male voice, it's gotta be Kilimnik.

She says to my face, "Leave, now." She tries to close the door. I block it with my foot.

"What's wrong? Why are you so anxious?" I look over her shoulder. It looks bleak inside. There's hardly any furniture, just a card table with a milk bottle and some baby food jars. She hesitates.

I say, "I'll help you, whatever you need."

Her eyes tear up. "We're about to get evicted. We've no rent money."

Well, I'm getting evicted myself: from the orphanage, from Chicago, from my life. God knows I can relate. My breath is coming in short pants. Whatever I thought I would find, it wasn't this. I hesitate and then pull the hot-box money out of my pocket. She obviously needs it more than I do. Her eyes widen as I count off \$600 and hold it out.

She stares at it forever and then finally takes it out of my hand and hides it away in the baby's blanket. She's crying as she looks in my eyes.

"As soon as I have an Army address, I'll write you. Please don't disappear again."

A squat, olive-skinned guy wearing a wifebeater, solid like a fire hydrant, comes into the kitchen.

"Who are you, little man?" He moves toward me. "Away from my wife or I will kill you."

I pull my foot out of the doorway.

She whispers, “Go,” and slams the door.

As I limp-walk back to the orphanage, watching the moon, I can’t stop my brain. All my life I’d felt that something good would come my way. But the waiting and wondering were so hard. When would it come? I felt people could see the emptiness in me while I waited for the something I knew nothing about. When Greenie came back and found me at age sixteen, I was sure she was the good. Then the Child Welfare people separated us. Now that I’ve found her and lost her again, I don’t know if I’ll ever be sure of finding any good.

It’s 9 p.m. when I get back to the orphanage. I go to bed hating that Greenie’s husband acted like she was his property and wondering if I’m a fool for giving her the money. Kilimnik probably just took it from her. Why did she have to marry him?

An unsettling dream ruins my sleep. I’m walking in the woods. A cavern-like blackness surrounds me, but I know the darkness ends somewhere ahead, and that light will include Greenie. I just have to hope. When I get there, Greenie, ghostly in the mist, beckons me forward. The light floods down, obscuring everything. I reach out and Greenie dissolves into nothingness.

Two days left.

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On Saturday afternoon, Janice comes to me with a message. “Mrs. Cartwright called. Greenie’s run away from her husband.”

When I get to the basement apartment, Kilimnik is sitting in a folding chair, crying. He doesn’t seem so tough now. He’s slowly throwing socks and underwear into a shopping bag. I ask where Greenie is. He swears and shakes his head, like he’s lost, saying he doesn’t know where she went, and now he can’t become a citizen either. “I have no money for rent. Greenie disappear with child. She goes out to talk to manager about let us stay here. An hour goes by, she don’t come back. I go to manager, and he say she never came to his apartment. I am fool.”

Now where do I write her? She’s disappeared again. It starts raining as I head back to the orphanage.

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That evening Mr. W. throws me a pathetic going-away party with cupcakes and pretzels. Fahey and Vertucci gift me a transistor radio. My hands shake so bad, I drop it on the linoleum floor. Janice picks the radio up and hands it back to me. I’m almost crying.

Christ, this is it. I may never see any of these people again.

The rec room band equipment is set up; only there’s a new orphan on the drum kit. The band’s already moving on without me.

The TV comes on. The Yippies downtown at the convention scream, “The whole world is watching.” The National Guard attacks them: gassing, clubbing, arresting. The Yippies are fighting a war in Chicago to avoid fighting the war in Vietnam. Absurd.

The next news segment shows a photo of the blown-up teamster. The headline reads: Money Missing.

Greenie walks in holding her daughter. Vertucci shuts the TV off. The silence is louder than the rainstorm outside. Greenie motions me to follow her. A cab waits at the curb. Under her umbrella, she tells me the marriage was a mistake. She’s leaving town without Kilimnik.

My mind starts reeling off the possibilities. I want to leave with her right now. I don’t care about anything else. “I’m going with you.”

“No, you can’t. You’ll be arrested if you don’t report for duty.”

“Fine.” I hate that I can’t be with her. “Then I’ll see you when I get leave, at Christmas.”

She nods her head.

I feel like the only guy on the planet who can’t solve this relationship puzzle. We both end up crying. “I’ll send my Army address to Janice.”

Greenie says, “I’ll do the same. Stay in touch.” She kisses me and they leave in the cab. Grief explodes inside me.

This can’t be happening.

I read somewhere that the essence of life is in the difference between the way things are and the way we want them to be. And things are definitely not the way I want them to be.

I’m overcome by all that I didn’t—or couldn’t—do for her. Realistically, I couldn’t do those things for myself either. And now it’s way too late. I can’t heal my broken spirit.

Losing people seems to be my specialty.

One more day.

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Enlistment day begins with a physical exam, then a written general test of skills and another Oath of Enlistment. This time everyone recites it together. The room is crowded, morning light cutting through a crack in the curtains and slashing across the wood floor. There’s maybe fifty of us. Some cheer when the oath finishes. You can feel the recklessness. We’re all leaving home and whatever we know behind. Even though I’ve escaped Vietnam without needing a deferment, I don’t know what my future holds.

In a rundown hotel before basic training starts, my roommates are two guys who look forward to firefights against Viet Cong. We have nothing in common. I've traded one institution for another. And I might be getting an education I don't want. Nothing is under my control. I feel myself drifting—like Greenie in my dream—into the mist of disappearance.

But maybe this new start will allow me to pick my own family.

I can only hope life gets better from here.

Control my breath; control my fear.

THE END

**AUTHOR'S NOTE:** *What inspired my story Love & War was the juxtaposition of two opposing forces in life. Paddy is trying to find love and a family while staying out of the Vietnam conflict, without going to jail. Unlike the Yippies, who stayed out of Vietnam by going to jail. I also wanted to touch on how outside events greatly affect people's lives, the way the Ukraine war is affecting so many lives today.*

*I'm inspired by the realism of Tim O'Brien's stories and the conflicting human dramas in Sally Rooney's writing. And I love the characters in Joshua Mohr's novels.*

**AUTHOR BIO:** I attended the Writer's Digest Annual Conference, the Santa Barbara Writers Conference, and the Kauai Writers Conference. I have studied with Greg Iles, George Saunders, and Joshua Mohr. I have a double BA from the University of California Santa Barbara in Film Screenwriting and Music Composition. My work is published or forthcoming in *Broken Plate*, *Ellipsis*, *Evening Street Review*, *Glint Literary Journal*, *Havik*, *Lunaris Review*, *Potato Soup Journal*, *The Quiet Reader*, and *Summerset Review*. My short story "The Towers" is published in *Potato Soup Journal's* Best of 2021 anthology.