

Second Prize – Grades 11 & 12

Business as Usual

“Don't go in, they're doing a euthanasia.”
But the girl was going to see it someday. She
Was going to do it someday, too.

This one didn't have a family present.
He was about 60 pounds, 15 years old,
Black and tan shepherd, brown eyes,
Arthritic joints, dull coat. Calm.

A tech slipped in a catheter,
Someone drew up 6mL of phenobarbital,
Hissing deep pink into the syringe.
The old dog thumped his tail once, twice,
As they pushed the barbiturate into his veins.

Then he was asleep. The girl felt his heart beating.
She kept track of it until it was so faint and she pushed
So hard, it might have been her own pulse.
This was death, then. It looked a lot like life.
They tagged him, name: (pet first) (owner last),
Stuffed him into a bag and then the freezer,
Promptly forgotten,
Yes. This was death.

by Olivia, Richmond, VA