

RUCKUS *Winter 2022*

Student Literary Magazine
The Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts

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Honey

By: Annalena Wagner

Her words were raw honey,
Chunky and thick, yet having smoothness.
They slowly dripped from her tongue,
With a pitter-patter pattern.
Everyone slurped up the sweetness and
Guzzled it down into their soar, pleading throats.
It coated them and stuck to their insides like synthetic glue.
Slowly, it filled them up and left them feeling “satisfied”.

They would never ignore
Her raw honey words.



Destina

By: Myah Platen

It's the sharp edge of a broken vase,
My Name.

The corner piece, the final note,
of a jigsaw puzzle, or a cool-toned
tune.

Given to me enclosed in a silk bag, sewn with
threads of hope, or wonder—
from hands piled in dirt, where they slope gently,
fingers crusted in chestnut ink,
and in it, a daisy blooms.

Maybe, I'm a book,
A prophet, because to her, I was Destiny—
a foretold chapter in a fraying
leather-backed novel.

a Destiny who belongs to someone,
Because it was hers.

a Destiny,
who is a Remnant. The lost piece, the hope
kept enclosed,
kept safe,
and nurtured like lurid amaranth under
the Amber rays of mid

Fall.

Rally

By: Lila Dobrowolski

On a blazing hot Saturday, I sat around my half of the country
to attempt to pour water onto the most destructively necessary
force of my lifetime; fear
To burn our holiness, in an attempt to disintegrate fear itself into
plain gray ashes
I left my dog at home and walked two blocks down to bathe in the
deep pain of intelligence
along with the spirits so important to me that they could possibly
burn that to ashes too
They passed the gene to me, along with 6 condoms, and trillions of
shivers through my soul
My brain started to ring louder than the fire alarm pulsating
throughout the hallways
at my brand new public middle school, whilst the 17 James' made
noises
to further disturb the kids who wore headphones to block out what
would inevitably hurt them
I could hide away forever in a cottage off the grid and the bombs
of the future would still reach
There is nothing to do but turn my betrayal into an example, my
anger into power
as I rise into my 15th year, dawning on the 3rd world war, and the
2nd war
against American indulgence, to fight for my right to not be treated
like a cow
Because one bad men sent his ignorant band of followers armed
with weapons of war
to spy on our lives and take our freedom away, replace it with
police knocking
I cooled a miniscule section of my grieving heart down with clear,
icy water outside of the Greek Orthodox church, and was dropped
back at my temporary place of housing
I layed down and dreamt my worst nightmares, and awoke to play
my melancholy songs
I sat up, awake in a dark place, illuminated by the energy of my
light up globe.

Warm Milk, and Other Things That Made Her Lonely

By: Zoe Lachter

She missed the breeze of rosemary
That wafted out over the front stoop
on Friday afternoons
And the smell of lavender
at dusk

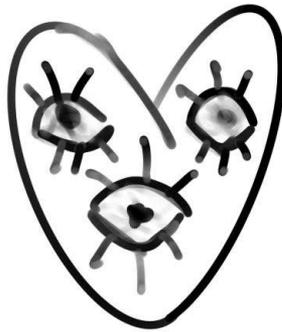
She missed sitting so close
to the movement of time and
the ocean and
the moon

She missed the feeling of cool fingertips
on her chin and behind her ear
and at the meeting of her thumb and her wrist
And the sound of
that song
hummed by *those* lips
And warm milk

These were the things of nostalgia and
solitude
that dropped anchors down her throat
and planted themselves just below her heartbeat
where her ribs met
These were the things that burned fires

in her lungs
and breathed out tendrils of smoke
where her breath should have been
The million moments living inside her
took up all the space where she had once
lived inside herself

She drifted out on
 The tide of her breathing
And one day she washed up
on the shore of someone separate
from the whoever had lived
her memories



Untitled

By: Regina Henry

Auburn leaves hath ceased their falling,
Trees will know the crows are calling
Death calls from betwixt the willows,
A chill through the soft wind billows
Death's left the air crisp and bitter—
Not all good that's gold can glitter.

Velvet crushed, blossom'd across stone—
A silk cloak lies still— strewn alone
Ignore the ill and pierce the veil—
Shun the pleasure bloodshed regales.
Corpse brides are left wick'd and waiting,
Betrothed, alone— love abating.

Autumn rues confessions halted,
With hope love would be exalted—
Dirges sung to a gothic flow'r,
The bats have left the bell tower
Soon one comes to fathom the dread
Our dear Bela Lugosi's dead.

Ashes

By: Rylee Ahart

A tale was told long ago. When the sun set in the meadow, the daffodil fields played piano. Under the midnight sky, through the drunken haze of the moon, the baby pink porcelain doll spun, playing its notes of glee. Cotton candy air and bubble gum deserts. Hide and seek through aging trees as the air went still. Before rotting tire swings lay stagnant in the grass. Before the doll's music turned somber. Before the smoke was a hazy red. Before ceilings caved in and the air smelled of ash. Before my crimson blood dripped onto Picasso paintings on the hundred-year-old, decaying carpet.

Dead ivy on the cracked marble, dead flowers in the courtyard. Signs covered by old graphite. Graphite erased by rain. Eaten alive, rusted barbed wire gates. Bullet hole camera screens. A push. Opened. Climbing miles of cold stone stairs. Inside. Palace or mansion, strong or weak? Disappeared or here? My shell walks through rooms. Broken gold plates on the floor. Black doves, dead eagles, starry flags on the burnt floors. I sit in the center of an oval room on one of those stereotypical business guy chairs. I read aged yellow papers. Social security numbers, missile plans. What's really been in the water. Rotting fireplace. Carved details of lost people. George Washington in the corner. Staring. I break the chair, creating my wood teepee in the fireplace. I take George Washington off the wall. I wait for my flame to come, then I throw him into the fire. The warmth of a meal. It reflects in my eyes. I light the carpet beneath me. I walk out of the room. The ashes fall like feathers. The ashes I've become. The ashes that remain.

Slow Burning Fuse

By: Parker Frank

hands grip around my waist, hold me down.
pin me like an insect to the corkboard wall in your mind.
i'll play the part of docile, if you play the part as mine
carve crescent moons into my skin, blunt nails pressing to deeply
into already scarred flesh
love is little acts of violence and promises of what is to come
Love is holy, a sacred thing meant to be desecrated by the hands of
boys with too much hate in their hearts and razors pressed under
tongues.
separate my jaw and my skull, put the fuse between my teeth and
make me thank you for lighting it.
i'll reward you with a tug on your choke chain, pulling you closer
to damnation
we will pull each other apart and put each other back together.
because the only thing god ever did for us was let us take part in
the act of creation.
mold each other with shaking hands into unholy creatures.
bound together by something other than the love between us.
i found god in the mouth of a man with two names
he finds it on the receiving end of my knife, blunt and unforgiving.

Eat the worms

By: Marlow Kemp

See the the creatures in the court
Gruesome trial, no retort
Callous questions, back and forth
Back and forth

Blood from a gavel
Never a travel so severe
Feel the chains linked on fear
Close around your grimy wrists

Skin
Of
A
Worm

Watch the little guys squirm
Dripping eyes, wetter palms
Hear the roaches squeal the songs
Of razor sharp qualms



HEADLIGHTS

By: Bryanna Tavaréz

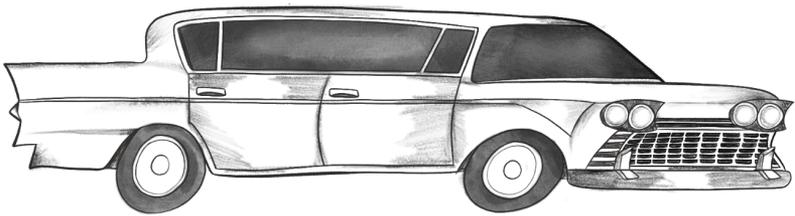
Sometimes I think about nights; nights when the headlights of your car scorched my eyes. I think about the rain that poured on a dreary, autumn night; and how the only thing that gave me warmth was the tips of your fingers. I think about the things we said, the things we laughed about, cried about. I think about the times when things were just so simple, so mundane.

You told me about how you thought it was funny that as children we always wanted to be “grown ups”; but as adults we miss the purity of a hug from our mothers. But sometimes I think about how sad that makes us. And then you’ll look at me and I’ll look at you; and somehow we know that it’s alright because we have at least one life to live for. I think about the gas station. About the ten dollars and seven cents that was enough for the both of us to eat for the day. Even if that was the last of what we had, I remember enjoying it like we didn’t know we were going to starve. I think about the long walk we had; walking to a place with seemingly no

Destination.

And that no matter how many times I told you how pointless it was, you kept your head up high; determined to find a place to keep us warm for “just one more night”. I think about the jacket we lost, sores on our feet, and blue fingertips begging, pleading to go back to your broken car.

I think about my heart pounding and painfully watching you lose control of all your five senses. At one point bodies gave out and I remember still holding your hand as you quietly whisper softly to me, “I love you. On Earth I love you, and in the afterlife. And if there is to be an afterlife, the universe will mark a star in remembrance of our love”. But for some reason, as snowflakes began to pile up gracefully on my chapped and withered lips, the last thing that I could think of was the beaming lights from the headlights of your car.



O Beautiful is the Moon

By: Helena Veluz

“O beautiful is the moon”

You say to an elf

“And ever far stretch the desert dunes”

He replies to you

“They stretch from hear to afar

But... Here, have some stars”

With your eyes of crystal

You grab a fistful

And begin to place them in the sand

“O beautiful is the moon”

You say to him once more

“Yes child, you’ll see it soon”

Says he as he begins to soar

“The heavenly crescent shines incandescent

And the people there glow too”

You follow him on your path of stars

You follow him through the dark

He takes to the moon himself

And away he flies that strange old elf

The moon looms above you tall

His voice booms, makes you feel small

“Silly child!”

He says with a smile.

“Do not be afraid.

I am not mean or vile.”

You look into his cratered face

He glows with kindness, and stunning grace.

“O beautiful is the moon!”

A third time with a shout.

“Hush child, You must sleep.”

He says in soft voice, not loud

So you begin to rest on a cloud

When you awake you are alone

And you find yourself back at home

You look into the sky at the moon

And say

“O beautiful is the moon”

And the moon winks

an ode to Ophelia.

By: Addyson Csordas

what did you ponder, there at the riverbank?
as the cold hug of tide clung to your hips
as you slipped,
into an ecosystem of the unknown

who did you think of?
when returning to the earth
lending yourself a gift to mother nature
your drowning depicted a decorous departure

does it unsettle you?
the artistry of your pain
how men steal your suffering,
insisting it is beautiful

ophelia, not mine, yet beloved
i give my regards
for they,
even in death
did not allow you to emote

Untitled

By: Daniel Mckissick



The strong north wind blew over the ice-tipped cliffs into the harsh white valleys, snow tumbling off the branches of dark green pine trees as it passed. Winds passed through the forests and over the lakes, they passed over the mountains and the cliffs, and many rested in the sky, swirling snowflakes left and then right. There were but a scarce few winds who howled through the rocky passages, and who instead fell through the gullies and into the gulches, and into a dreary, freezing, cave cluttered with old bones of the long dead.

Inside that dark, lifeless cave, something hunched over what seemed to be a forgotten box, moldy and decayed, growling as saliva dripped from its long teeth. It smelled something, something new. Something exciting. The something wanted it, no, needed it. *How?* It thought *stalk, find, must have! Must have!* It had answered its own question. “Must have, must kill, need new blood,” it raved to itself, in a language that men knew no longer.

Far to the west, further than many had traveled, a group of men foreign to the land gathered to a dwindling flame. Their clothes were old and ragged, stained with old blood of animals and themselves, and their mood was sullied by the time of many moons, and long journeys, but they still lived. Among them, many carried strange weapons and pouches of black powder, and many more carried what could only be described as unfamiliar tools.

There were but a few small shacks, made with logs sticks, that they had managed to construct in the time before the snow had fallen, thick, and heavy for the first time. They spoke to each other in a language that people had never heard, and would not hear again for many months, and as that wasn't to be the biggest of their differences, they had made many enemies among those who dwelled on the land they intruded upon, and were now alone, sick, and cold, without so much as a fur to cover themselves from the cold or a sympathy from those they had treated with disgust and superiority.

Over the travelers from far, as the sun dimmed into twilight, it began to snow. The clouds were full with snowflakes, more balls of snow than snowflakes, sending them sailing through the air, down, spiraling into a blinding snowstorm. The stoic trees bent under the weight of the snow upon their branches and mountainsides sent their snow falling down, little by little under the weight that the storm had disposed onto the misplaced rocks that loosely hung on. The night was silent and the explorer's fire flickered and grew dimmer, the sky shifted to purple and then black.

As the sun faded from view, and the stars budded, one by one, a creature somewhere clawed and crawled its way out of a dismal hole in the ground, growling and snarling as claws met stone. Snow first landed upon its back as it emerged into the moonlight. Once hazel fur now glistened a sleek black, dusted with white speckles. A bleached white skull touched the moonlight, four antlers sprouting from it and forming a number of sharp points. On four limbs, the creature clambered. *The scent!* it thought *Must find the scent!* The creature left no footprints in the snow, only a small mark where its skill brushed the snow. Scuttling off into the thick trees and brush again it chanted *Find! Follow! Stalk! Kill! THE WENDIGO NEEDS NEW BLOOD!*

Snow, heavy and fast, fell through the air, and descended, and plummeted through the sturdy branches and the tired knotted trunks of pines, falling down onto the floor. The night was growing

into its prime, and a fire had flickered and died in an empty clearing. The shacks were dark and dull, and the trees swayed and groaned in the wind of the blizzard. A man sat outside of the smallest shack, wary but his senses dulled from exhaustion. In the dark arose a noise that stirred the man's fatigue from his body and the tiredness from his soul as he clutched his rifle. From every direction came scratching and scraping against thick bark, and clicks soon joined them in an odd rhythm. The man began to think he was hallucinating, as his senses failed him in his groggy and chilled state. In the dark through the falling snow, for a moment, the man saw a dark figure as it approached, and as soon as it appeared, it suddenly disappeared again.

Something grew close, and seized the man by his midsection, and snatched him away into the darkness, letting out a terrible resonating shriek, awaking the other nearby travelers. But it was *too late*. As the people stumbled out of their shack in their listless and tired state, very few things could be done, for they saw before them a great beast, although not much more than a skin on a skeletal frame. Its muzzle was stained by blood, much to the dismay of the people who witnessed the creature's shameless and ravenous display firsthand. Little remained, now of the night watchman, save for a crimson mist among the snow. Again, the wendigo screeched and charged for the nearest of the settlers, its limbs twisted and curved expertly over the snow as it swung, and continued to swing, tearing through any attempt the feeble people made to resist its will.

Though the resistance was long and bloody, it ended as it had started. An encampment in the woods sat silently in the forest, abandoned and decrepit. There was nobody who left who knew what had happened on that silent night, and nobody ever will. The wendigo still roams the forests to this day. Finding people, embedding souls into its own as it sees fit. Do not intrude on the wendigo, for it will exact its revenge.

Right Now

By: Danica Dollenger

Now they're killing in
cold blood.

What happened to
true love?

When did my body become
a war
that we're fighting?

Bang,

bang,

bang.

It's coming from all sides now.

It's everybody's fight now.

Why can't people in this
place

understand that

race doesn't leave a

trace on
personality?

When did this all start
with a shot through the
heart?

It's tearing families
apart.

It makes me want to scream!
How could people do these
things?

Dehumanizing should matter
to you.

Because it's happening
to you
right now,
right now,
right now.

When will we wake up
and see
the possibilities?

We need to turn this
around.

Unwind the clock
that was wound.

Because on this track,
we're bound
for a cliff
and the gear shift is
stuck,
but not
broken.

GLORY: (verb)

magnificence or great beauty. (2)

By: Isabella Tallada

What is it to *wonder*?

To hope for the future

To desire the past

What does it mean to be *remembered*?

Do we really want that

Or is it a fragment of our imagination?

Is it really what we chase?

Is the thing that will succeed us

Our *legacy*

Something that we really need

Or is family the *real* answer?

Is it more fulfilling to find a home

A *love*

A friend who knows you better than your mirror

A brother who will never give up on learning how to braid hair

Is it better to chase?

To grasp a *neverending* dream

Something that you will never fully understand

Something that will never fully end.

Something that ebbs and flows unpredictably

Or is it better to *matter*?

Matter to the friends that you met in your 9th grade english class

Matter to your dance teacher

Matter to you mother and to your father

Is it better to matter or to leave your incredibly diligent footprint behind?

Or is it glorious in itself

to *love*?



Eyes of Stone (Excerpt)

By: Rayna LeBlanc

The smoke slithered up into the air and small sparks spat out from the wood. Since her entire habitat was surrounded by water, all of the wood that she salvaged took months to fully dry. This is why she mostly saved her firewood for the colder months, and making food in bigger portions. As she kneeled on the stone floor she felt her eyes flutter sleepily. There wasn't much to do in the cave, so most of the time, all she did was sleep and prepare for the next day. It wasn't an ideal life, that was for sure, but there was quite literally nothing she could do about it. There was no way that she could break the spell that bound her to this cave. Slowly, she twirled the fish on the spit as each side cooked, sizzling and filling the cave with a familiar sour smell.

Once all of the fish had been cooked, she moved on to the next task of the day. A week ago, a broad-shouldered man from a wealthy family had come in, bearing only a wooden club. He was convinced that he could strike Medusa down with just that in his hand. Of course, he was wrong and had far too much pride in his fighting abilities. The man who came in the next day was much less confident, forced to fight by his father. He wasn't promised any money and he was shaking for the thirty last seconds of his life. Medusa felt half bad for him as she knew he didn't really want to kill her. She had to remind herself that she hadn't purposefully turned him to stone, he had just looked her directly in the eyes. Gracefully, her hands clasped the cold statue, and threw him into the water. She watched as he sunk into the depths of the murky water, until he was entirely engulfed in darkness. After staying there for a moment longer, she returned to the other men, continuing her business.

Later that evening, Medusa sat, wrapped in tattered cloth. Even during Winter, this was all she had to keep her warm. She had

begun to grow accustomed to the chilly evenings, almost immune to the icy air that crept into her cave. Her fingers stroked through

the muddy paint she had stored away, stirring the pigments together. Over the years she spent here, she had learned how to make paint from the flowers and other plants that grew close to her cave. Clay was more commonly found though, so most of her rocky walls were covered in a burnt orange color. She enjoyed painting, which she had only found out when she was first trapped here. It eased her nerves and allowed her to set free all of the pent up emotions she had. The pieces were angry, haunting sometimes, but on good days were beautiful and portrayed luscious green hills covered in Spring flowers. That night, she was only left with some dark umber and foggy green paint, so she began to sketch out a woman. It wasn't herself, but someone who felt somewhat familiar. She softened the cheekbones, curving the deep colors into her skin. The woman's eyes were kind, and glazed over with something mysterious. They were green. Maybe it was the shade of green she was using that made the eyes seem ghostly, but she wasn't quite sure. The painting was very pretty, portraying what would be a very much desired woman in any nearby village. Medusa had only ever seen men in the past sixteen years, so it was refreshing to see someone who reminded her of herself with soft features and calming eyes. It was something in the men's faces that simply enraged her. In the beginning, she feared the men that came for her, but as time went on, she learned that they stood no chance against her.



Seasonal Joy

By: Liam McDonald

The morning mud was starting to harden,
And I gazed off into the shining sun;
A warmth that comes nicely in early spring.
It was a pleasant spring day.

The short days with blooming flowers were gone,
Cicadas couldn't stay silent; leaves grew back!
Long evenings, with sunsets and stars reflecting off the lake.
It was a pleasant summer day.

Fungi began to grow, hiding beneath the yellow leaves.
Leaves fell all day long, accompanied by a small breeze.
Piles were raked; the days were cold and somber.
It was a pleasant autumn day.

Once the trees were stripped of their leaves,
The snow began to fall gently, covering the empty branches.
Chimneys were ablaze; melted snow soaked the floor.
It was a pleasant winter day.

I've grown to tolerate the rocking chair creak,

By: Jamison Butz



incessant to tell myself it was saying something.
I lived off drinking cups filled to the brim with fog.

You came with bloody palms bearing shards of glass from the
mirror you had broken yourself just to prove a point. My hands,
too, bled that night.

And nearly every night since.

It's been weeks...no more eating dust.

I've spent an unforgivable amount of time on my knees digging,
turning the flower garden you planted for me inside out, pleading
for reason as to how you lifted your hand one day and, with ease,
rewrote the definition of Solitude which I had wholly preached
since my heart first felt the true weight of the universe upon it.

Solitude, in your terms and therefore mine: forgetting to breathe in
the presence of another yet becoming aware, too aware, of each
last breath, falling in love with feeling ashamed, suffocated by
one's intimacy but relishing within the pressure.

Michelle

By: Maddie Hess

Her hair slides down her shoulders
Like two obsidian serpents armed for battle-
The piercing cerulean of her eyes the ammo,
Her lips as crimson as the blood she wants pouring out of me.
How can she be so sharp, so unbelievably phlegmatic,
Yet make me melt after one second of her hand in mine?
Every word that escapes her mouth could be woven into starlight,
Positioned in a museum for the beautifully cruel.
I want to paint the warm colors of the tenderness in her voice,
Drink down a vial of the tears I cried when she left me isolated.
My lungs are now breathing in the magic she thought she captured
The opalescent glow is in my safekeeping
She should remember the souls that she raptured
As she faces the revenge of the mistreated.



Breakfast

By: Finnegan Beatty

By the time Donovan arrived at the Willard residence, it was nearly four in the morning. He pulled the silver SUV into the gravel driveway only a few miles off the interstate. As the car rolled up to the log cabin, pebbles pinged off the underside. The pebbles were big enough and hit hard enough that he could feel almost every clang and clank as the wheels flung them. He just hoped that they didn't ruin the exhaust. Even worse if they tore up the bottom of the car.

There were no lights on in the cabin. Donovan stepped out and cracked his back. He had been driving since midnight. He walked down to the edge of the driveway. There was no mailbox. Someone had thrown a newspaper near the front of the driveway. It was still rolled up and secured with a rubber band. Donovan checked the date. The paper was a week old. He started to walk back to the SUV when he noted again that the only trail marks in the driveway were his own. If the Willard guy had left a week ago, there should still be tire tracks in the gravel. He covered them up. That was the only explanation.

Shades obscured any view inside the cabin. When Donovan tried the door, it was locked, bolted shut from the inside as there was no give when he pushed hard on it. He was going to have to kick it down. That wasn't a problem. He was tall and wide. And he was used to kicking in doors. The problem was somebody hearing it. Donovan scanned for any nearby houses, and the closest one was more than two hundred yards away. No lights. Good. Very good. He backed up from the door and kicked hard.

The door bent and split under Donovan's heel. The living room was simple yet welcoming. A couch took up one wall. Paintings decorated all the way to the bedroom. There was a small rug in front of the couch and no television. Spotless. Donovan wasn't surprised. This wasn't like the movies where people flee in a hurry leaving a mess in their wake. In the real world, people were always more careful, trying to clean up their tracks so Donovan couldn't find them. He almost always found them. People paid good money for him to find them.

Donovan stepped into the cabin and closed the broken door as best he could. Sure enough, it had been bolted shut. The cabin smelled as if the entire interior had been bleached clean. He ignored it and began to inspect the grooves in the wall for anything hidden. Letters, documents, any information that would help him find Willard.

All he knew was the guy's last name. The guy who hired him gave him the bare minimum of information.

He tore up pieces of the floorboard, sliced open the couch in the living area for anything damning. He used a simple box-cutter. Nothing glamorous. Other than the carry-on bag in his car, that was the only thing he brought. Business constantly had him on the move. If he needed something, he could always get it on the way. He found nothing in the couch. He wasn't exactly sure what he was supposed to be looking for. He was never sure until he saw it, and he always found something.

"Come on, Willard. What am I ever gonna do with you?" Donovan sighed.

He moved on to the bedroom. He cut open the mattress and there, stuffed inside, was maybe three-hundred dollars. There must have been more at some point because it was all crumpled and shoved to one side. Willard left in a rush or did not think the cash was worth the danger.

"Just like the movies," Donovan said to himself, "Just like the movies."

He looked over at the small bookshelf beside the bed. An empty bookshelf. Did Willard really need to bring reading material while he was on the run? He checked the work desk last. There wasn't much but he found a name tag. Shaun Willard. That really narrowed it down. The name of the diner where he worked was faded but legible. Donovan slipped the name tag into the pocket of his jeans. He walked out of the cabin.

When he started the SUV, his tire pressure light flashed angrily. He got out and inspected each tire. A rusty three-inch nail stuck out of the back left's tread. Among the pebbles were a scattering of more nails. How in the hell did he miss all of this? Willard knew someone would be coming for him. He also knew how to slow them down.

Donovan sat thinking under the black sky. He looked back at the cabin and noticed something tipped alongside a propane tank. A mountain bike. Mud splattered and draped in cobwebs. But the tires were solid. He smiled a childish grin, like a ten-year-old on Christmas morning. Donovan got up, opened the trunk of the car and grabbed his travel bag.

Within an hour, Donovan was on the highway, peddling steadily as vehicles zipped past. He's going to breakfast. He's going to find Willard. It's a job, but a very lucrative business. He's getting a lot of money for this. Just overhead, the sky bled in orange hues as a warm, welcoming sun rose from the darkness.

The Robin

By: Alyse Gammons

As you watch him perform his wings spread wide,
His limbs are flexible, it's almost like his neck is unsnap-able,
like you could bend it,
putty in your hands.



A bird with a broken neck cannot fly,
but will always soar if unbreakable.

As he watches you his eyes twinkle with regret of ever meeting
such a man,
the ringmaster.

Almost like he's trying to steal away your attention with his
glances,
"save me" echos in those empty, lifeless, pupils
as he stares me down.

I wish I could see what once was untouched and fragile,
What could've hurt such a beautiful bird
one with such a limber body?
So, docile, is a bird
whose wings are snapped back.

Bleeding out all over the ground the robin chirps its last harmony,
a song only the ringmaster will hear.

For who could kill such a beautiful flying angel,
other than the devil himself.

flammam; sempiterne

By: Birdi Diehl

The winds of inevitability reached their peak of hubris the day I met you. no longer yearning for the constant sway of upturned tree branches but for the what if's of rain storms and running in between their droplets.

evanescent: the sense of union between the sun and the moon, a moment when their children Stars did not die out in impotence, lack of faith smothered by flames griping feldspar- tight. crossed in path, purpose bleeding with every step, treading lightly in an ivory chamber air-sealed with quiescence, struck by evening terra venus. a threshold was crossed and later shared with soul split wine over love advice on dining table backseat serenades, or rather it was matcha in your cup.

you were always meant to know a little more about the color of the sky than me but never Van Gogh's starry night. shouting arcane at heaven's eyes, never wishing to master their magic, staggering and pointing to the sky to basque hand in hand in its divine glory, lighted by yellow street lamps and ursa major. ancient cosmic dances your knowledge to share and mine to listen, hand perched on a bird's branch of silent chirrs, fingers over skin over encephalon under pearl's fenestella.

our bodies made of not light or darkness, nor earth's dirt or the elements. pinpricked by the eclipse of midsommar melodies and threatening the heat. blaze to blaze, existing to coexist, to hurtle, to collide.

the shifting presence bent to the will of alice's tea parties and painting in la luna's light. rest and repentance in chapel hill gardens, tended by the calloused hand of someone who does not know our names or our religion. knees dug into the dirt in prayer,

worshiping not the ground beneath our feet for my hands and yours
have taken us more places than they ever will.

thought is not drawn on blades for a battle unless sharpened with ‘i
do’s’ and promises of a better tomorrow. heads turned to cry in
happiness and laugh out of lovesick tears, entwined from woozy
words hand- stitched and woven from abstinent apprehensions.

we shared hearts across pavement cracks and never let the river
flow with red stained droplets, letting them tell different stories of
woe, letting them be the stories of others.

the awakening happened during blackberry frost, raised questions
to raised eyes to recognition. anima pieces once scattered and now
picked up on the beaten path to dusty shaded hollows, tidy but
inhabited.

goodbyes are only meant for those who do not love with the crux
of vicarious pith, Yahweh dangling from your ear while Luzifer
whispers from me to you across the console, cursed but you like it
better in dante’s inferno.

„left or right“

„the opposite way to home“

and to the wind we go.

- the origin of the lovers’ odyssey, unfinished

frostbitten

By: Mal Vaughn



i love how stale the air is when it comes out of my mouth in smoke
the wind blows it away before my eyes can capture the shape its
taken

the temperature makes my eyes glassy and they almost freeze over
the atmosphere is so cold it almost burns

little patches of my skin stick to my clothes and once they're
peeled away

silver drips down my dullened flesh

i wish i could feel the hurt

i don't even feel anymore

to be anything more than a freezing figure in my own yard

i'd rather be roasted alive

than stay inside this prison

even though it's just my body

stuck in a subzero glass case



Reaping Slow

By: Jacob Fuhrer

I reap and I sew;
knee-deep in the snow-
where nothing grand grows-
And the cattle erode,
and become scattered rows;

of rose bushes,

and hedge stones.

Thrown from the balcony.

These bloodied bandits,
these bastards of mine.
Who see dry lawns and smile-
Lives lived in denial.

On edge- put on trial-
lost friends on the Nile.

Salvation is free.

When love has no fee.

Lo I never looked back,
cause I fear common knowledge,
And see somber saint calls,



from these halls of his collar.
Where I speak to the walls,
when I once was alone;
now home to the stars,
and the gods in your jars.

Now new flesh is holy,
though the newts ate you slowly.

Unknown in the home;
a stone in the road.
Stones in the road,
and alone on my own.
Then the tone took a turn,
And my brain watched it's back.
Slow crawl to the sack,
Oh so broken and cracked.
Still alive all the same,
Stitched to breath one more day
and to relight your flame.

Cause the day rose like flowers,
cause the cattle once soured.



Goblin in Me

By: Jesse Graham

Well there's a tall lil bugger
and he's just a bit stubborn
and he's standing at my door

He's mean and lean

By golly,
this goblin might be me

I look in the mirror
what do I see,
a gross green man staring back at me

He's got my wallet
he's got my keys

By golly,
I think this Goblin might be me



A Simple Suffer

By: Mischa Leonord

All the better things begin to die in August.
Crueler concepts doused in
hot, sticky molasses are the
Only organisms
That thrive through sheer drops in temperature;
One hundred to sixty is nothing to us,
But startles the molecular in ways
We'll never be able to empathize with.
Ultimately,
Your daylilies and hydrangeas will
Anticipate their system's failure;
Stock up for a brief winter death as if they're
Annuals.
They're not.
A heart can only go so long worrying for something else.

August isn't Autumn but god
Doesn't it smell the same?
Like oncoming change that
You can't quite stop?
Spin your wheel, pick your card:
You've seen it before.
Isn't it kind of like a question
that pauses
in
between
syllables
Just before it hits your ears?
It's a secret,
a truth you know only because
Everyone's attempted to hide it from
you.

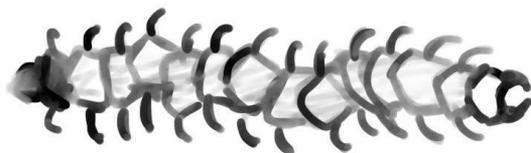
It's like watching something hideous
Be born in your name,
Something like shame...
You can't quite kill whatever it is in August.

Guilt and grief are immune to the cold.
They're one of the ruthless truths,
Held together by molten-hot sap
That'll burn off your fingertips and identity
If you're not careful.
You grieve for the messy nativity
Not because the little monster,
Your blood,
Has fallen still;
No, it definitely moves.
But because your past is in front of you,
Drenched in amniotic fluid,
Screaming at you in language
Home to only the fallen babylon.
Baby jesus doesn't sit in front of you;
This is not a creation
Worth heaven,
Nor hell,
Nor a life on earth,
But you.
It is August.
It is of crueller things doused in molasses.
All the better things begin to die in August.

Untitled

By: Paige Capone

the world is too much with us.
constant connection causes short circuiting within who we are.
creates images of unattainable scenery.
the world is too much with us.
morphing reality and fiction.
it blurs into a murky masterpiece,
unsettling, but fiery smooth.
making us weep as we attempt to digest it all,
leaving a bad taste in the back of our mouths,
deciphering who we are.
beautiful and sickening to the eye.
reveries channel through my being,
each with the subliminal message that
the world is too much with us.



Crescent

By: Katie Fretz

Oh crescent moon in the sky,
When will it be my time to die?
I lie here accepting my fate,
yet sometimes I just wish I had already met my demise.
For the clock struck two yet I still am awake,
tossing and turning pretending my life isn't fake.
For I've stumbled down an alleyway of sin,
waiting for something good to begin.
But instead I just call my friends,
waiting til the dial tone ends-
a reminder that everyone else has fallen asleep,
and my temptation to continue has made me weak.

Oh crescent moon you hang so high,
the ominous clouds smudge the sky.
How I wish I could join you amongst the stars,
but I'm already so deep, I'll never get that far.
Instead of trying to change I shove all the blame,
but maybe acceptance could treat this pain.
Maybe tonight I could slip into nirvana,
and bestow myself some new found honor.

Oh crescent moon she says I've changed in good ways,
but can she recall my darkest days?
It's been a couple months since I lost my armor,

I hide behind a voice that trembles and stutters.
Oh this peculiar night has troubled my mind,
how can I not think and pass the time?

Oh crescent moon he says he could love me,
but how can he love a mind paranoid of being free?

Crescent moon,
glistening stars,
troubled minds with troubled pasts-
why do you not forgive me and make these hours last?



Cosmic Now

By: David Fadem

Favorites:

Drops in the basin.

Streams

Set their paths deep.

To the disparate puddles waiting,
Their arbitrary reflections—
Deadening—
The worlds beneath compartments.

Night sky clouds
Are cosmic now.
Now they're nebulas
Wafting through.

Their preeminence in the pools,
Their unerring plasma
Casted down, rippled—
Again and again—
The clouds bear no rain
While the reservoirs wait.

a rose that never saw the sun

By: Juno Hadian

a lone rose behind a shed
beautiful on its own,
but a lonely sight to see

how you've grown in such conditions i'm unsure
a rundown shed that's been lacking attention itself
blocks your view of the sun
i know you won't be able to sustain yourself alone much longer
so i'll plant you somewhere nice

to make up for the life you've lived in the dark
i'll make sure every new memory is spent in the light

when a hailstorm hits, i will sit outside with an umbrella over you
when it snows, i will wrap your stem with burlap to keep you
warm
when things get rough, know i will take care of you

and as you wilt away in my hands
the thorns will pierce through me
and nestle underneath my skin

i will never take them out

By: Sienna Gallus

(These days urge me and urge me to write
but I don't yet have it in me
So just let me whisper
until the world quiets to listen)

Forgive me:

It always takes me so long to find my way back here,
These words I tell you now,
after months,
—are little things.

they are the stray hairs left behind
by something hungry and ruthless.

A dog of few tricks, I am back.
tail between my legs as I type this

— a writer's hiatus



Editor's Note:

RUCKUS 's initiative to highlight young, diverse voices is a vital opportunity for literary artists at Charter Arts to articulate their perspectives and experiences. Through the Literary Arts Publications course, senior literary artists can dive into the publishing, editing, and marketing processes of producing a literary magazine, while developing key skills for later artistic and academic explorations or occupations.

We were once freshmen, sophomores, and juniors, and felt the anxiety and insecurities that came along with submitting personal work to, for many, our first literary magazine. Now, as we are seniors, the sense of pride in our art is ever more present while reading each piece. To be able to recognize everyone's talent is incredibly fulfilling, but takes a sizable amount of vulnerability as well. We, seniors and teachers, are more than proud to be involved in this culmination of passion and individuality. The message we hope you'll gather from this sentiment is to never be afraid to show your own identity and to continue to put your voice into the world. As writers, having our voices heard is instrumental in our craft: We write for expression; we write for change and hope those who consume RUCKUS read it to *be changed* (even if it's in just some small way).

Read willingly, intend to cause a RUCKUS.