



# RUCKUS

STUDENT LITERARY ARTS MAGAZINE

SPRING 2021

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# **RUCKUS**

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

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# THE LEHIGH VALLEY **CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL** FOR THE **ARTS**

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## *Mission Statement*

*The Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts provides a unique environment that fosters a creative, rigorous academic approach to learning and a development of talents in the arts. Built on passion, discipline and a commitment to excellence, this integrative educational experience inspires all students to believe in who they are and in what they can accomplish.*

*The works contained within Ruckus are the artistic expressions of the individual members of the Literary Arts Program. This collection is not intended to be viewed as a statement about the views of ChArts as a whole. Some readings and other content in this magazine may include topics that some readers may find triggering and/or traumatizing. We apologize for any content which may be viewed as offensive.*

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## Roots

Bethany Dominguez

On my father's side,

I was raised by

Spanglish speaking

Pan frying

Non-stop cooking

*Arroz con gandules* with golden rice

that will make your mouth water

“Eat, mama, you're too skinny”

Kind of Puerto Ricans

On my mother's side,

I was raised by

Loud speaking

Red wine drinking

From scratch baking

Creamy ricotta cheesecake

causing hearts to melt

like it does on the tongue

Cheek pinching and kissing

“*Mangia, mangia!*”

Kind of Sicilians

I was raised by

Soothing and swaying ballads

Melodious voices

blending together in harmony

Rhythmic steps

choreographed to robotic beats

Pulling your sister off her chair

and twirling 'till your feet hurt

Kind of music

On a sweaty rubber mat,

I was taught by

Punching and kicking

Nunchuck swinging

Agile sparring

Persevering

Self-disciplining

Leadership preaching

Kind of black belts

For nearly thirteen years,

I have been raised by

Discussion starting

Rigorous grading

Speech giving

Shakespeare reading

Problem solving

Awe-inspiring

Kind of teachers

In a building five minutes away,

I was brought up by

Off-beat clapping

Tight embracing

Cardigan and big hat wearing

Church going

“God bless”

Kind of Christians

Born an immature seed

planted in dry soil,

I was watered by these one-of-a-kind

Puerto Ricans,

Sicilians,



Christians,  
and instructors

And like a rose,  
I bloomed with humility and diligence

## **The Haunting Imprint**

Mercedes Lobb

Oh, I love the pain.

Was that really a wise  
thing for me to say?

Or do my feathers  
not really drown  
when he covers them  
with ink?

My fingertips glide  
gently across his skin.

My eyes see red,  
but my heart sees dandelions.

I gather up the courage  
to tell him that I am done.

But what is the use?

He will just tell me  
whatever I wish to hear,  
to uphold my wishes,  
and quench my fears.

I want a thunderstorm,  
because I believe that

is the only way to start anew.

But I am tired.

Tired of chasing the dandelions  
into oblivion.

And tired of watching my once  
pure heart become tainted  
with his blood.

It is becoming diluted,  
and my clarity is  
running dry.

Soon enough I will be left  
unable to change at all.

He will have made  
his mark on me,  
and in return,

I would have to live  
with his presence etched  
Onto my skin forever.

## **In the Beginning**

Brody DeFreest

“Let there be...”

and God?

Did that unparalleled melody join in the name of harmony and spend eternity making love to mother nature?

Is the expanse between land and sky as deep and wide as the difference between dark and light?

“Let us make man in our image”

Turning us from dust to clay.

Molding our broken bodies from disarray to your sons and daughters.

For you made the perfect life, for Adam was a cultivator in the vein of you... the creator.

And Eve was the heart ripped from your chest, lord, created with beauty and love.

They spent their days tending to the garden and were invited to enjoy it all.

All you asked was to not go near a single tree.

For its fruit was devious.

It was filled with sickly knowledge.

And I wonder what you felt god... from the overflow of your soul you crafted these people, but they sought to dethrone their lover's rule.

"Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat the forbidden fruit?"

And the enemy still distorts "obedience" for "control", he tells us to fill our earthly desires and feel whole in our flesh.

But only for a second does that satisfy the black pit embedded deep into our skin by the sins of the world.

## **Farmland**

David Fadem

Freshly tarred pavement and segments of grass

Give way to twisted oak veins

Dotted across the rolling hillscape.

Behind me, the church strains eyes

With concrete rectangles, not engraved spires.

Nonetheless, if you ignore the creeping corners of your eyes,

It is only yellow, rounded slopes

Indented with grooves of comatose crops,

Hints of sunset peach behind foggy breath.

A songbird flies by.

## Off to Sea

Ren Felix

Under the water of the crystal clear sea, I find peace in the silence that surrounds my body. The salty taste on my tongue as I leave reminds me of the warmth I leave behind, the only blanket that comforted me, though it covered nothing at all. Under the water of a boiling hot shower, I pick at my skin as I try to remember the ocean I let consume me before. Scathing the surface, dragging my nails along lines of stretch marks, etching away. I wonder if I could scratch away at my skin until I'm in the body I've always wanted. Carve out the wondrously beautiful person, the one I know lies underneath this imposter's face, a persona I've learned to call me. I'd find the lovely lithe figure which rests beneath my own. I know with certainty that this cannot be who I am.

It's always begged the question, what if you don't find it, who you say you are? If I scratched away at this skin draped over me, finding that there's nothing disguised beneath...The answer to that is simple, I'd rot. I'd scratch and scratch and scratch until there's nothing left to scratch at. I'd simply spoil away gently, swaying to the sound of your asinine, sardonic words which sting me too easily, I was always too sensitive. I'd wither away until there's nothing left but paper-thin skin stretched over bone. Skin so thin, it would crack with the cold, until it splits. I'd finally come undone, my heart pausing, my lungs collapsing, and my mind unfolding. I'd spill out of myself, the same way I've too often spilled my stomach. An inky dark mass left in my wake, I'd flood the hallways and the floors. I'd sink, I'd sink softly, not into the fertile earth but into the frigid sea.

The wide, thrashing, dark sea. For once, I am free. I'd swirl amongst the rapid waves, it would be frighteningly beautiful, I can swear I see it. A storm, an ominous black sea, the backdrop for the most violent storm. Thick, suffocating clouds suspended above would choke the air as gold lightning bursts whip the waters, silver rain slashing through space, through the very fabric of time itself. I would be a storm whose beauty would live in infamy, a shadowy memory for all forced to live it. The type of storm that drives you to starvation, suicide, or pure insanity.

I often think to myself, if I can't be the perfect body I want to be why must I be anybody at all?

I am a sinner, a grand disgrace of sorts. My attraction to the same sex would always make me an outcast and I live in fear of the thoughts of others for I am too much of a coward.

I have always envied the dancer and how they live so fearlessly. I wish I had the motivation they do, to rise from my doubts the way they come up off the floor with aching feet to twirl once more. I wish I could unleash my passion the way they do.

Molasses limbs cling to your honey-sweet warmth.



**January 6, 2021**

Zoe Latcher

These past weeks I've felt  
Compelled to do unreasonable things

They've made me want  
To search through my drawers  
And my basement  
And myself

Again and

    Again and

        Again

Just in case there is a life raft to be found

Made me want  
To gather up all of my pieces  
By hand

Strand of hair

    By fingernail

        By poem about my backyard

And find within them

An answer

Of sorts

A clue, some proof, some great timeless understanding

I forgot I left there

Made me want

To make a ferris wheel of the globe, go

Around and

Around and

Around for a while

A telescope in my left hand

And a microscope in my right

One eye on each and

My mind trailing a few miles behind

Made me want

To open all the windows in my house

And wait for the rain to pour in

Because maybe then I'll be able to believe the news reports

Of heavy showers

Of heavy hearts

And I know I won't find what I'm looking for

I tell myself "you won't find what you're looking for"

And myself whispers back “but how can you be sure?”

So

I am compelled to do unreasonable things

Compelled to search endlessly

And watch mindlessly

And write poetry

About present-tense histories

I'll never understand.

## **Backpack in the Trees**

Nathan Leonard

There's a backpack in the trees,  
I saw it while I was driving home.  
The car was moving so fast,  
So swiftly,  
That I almost missed it.

With autumn comes nature's quiet death,  
And so the branches that stick out  
in every direction  
Lacked their usual leafy drab.  
The tree was dying, I could tell  
Even without nature's sweet, green kiss.

It's why I managed to see the backpack so clearly.  
Its blue body and yellow straps were clinging  
So desperately onto the tree by a thread;  
An attempt at holding onto not only that branch,  
But many memories from another life.

I often wonder what that memory could be;  
What life?

Could it have been filled with love?

With wonder and adventure?

With violence?

I often wonder who owned the backpack.

I often wonder what happened to them.

Maybe it belonged to a hiker in the woods,

A camper.

Perhaps, it belonged to a victim.

Perhaps, there was someone else with that person

And their backpack.

Perhaps they did not realize

They weren't alone.

Sometimes I think about a ghost and this backpack.

It's usually a silly, cartoony little thing

With a sheet

Draped over its head.

I imagine the ghost launching

The heavy backpack into the trees.

I imagine blood smeared across the ghost's cream-colored sheet.

I imagine it was unjustly spilled.

Murder happens everywhere.

For I am the ghost, and I murdered their memory

With injected liquid gold,

Purple skies,

Damaged, frizzy hair,

Whispered theme songs,

Parties and playdates that always went

Wrong.

There were good times, I know there were.

For now, all I remember is those

Brutalized memories.

Maybe they are the backpack,

As I am the ghost.

Maybe they are the blood that

Drips down the backpack's side,

And I am the sheet,

Stained by their actions and words.

I hurt them just as they hurt me,

And perhaps we both murdered each other's memories.

Maybe, we're all backpacks in the trees.

## **Symbiosis**

Amani Jones

I've been beckoned to the forest,  
to dance in the understory, sheltered by the fern fronds  
and dressed in morning dewdrops.

In this bed, I find that fungus peeks through  
the dead matter.

Like the zygomycota, basidiomycetes, I find myself  
Scattered,  
lost somewhere in the compost pile.

We ask for nothing more than to forge our way into ravines and watch as the skin splits at our  
heels, Let bramble and thorns have their way with our hair, And our mouths leak some  
mucilaginous substance that we fail to call by name.

Could I climb from the ground on which I stand  
I'd find myself wishing to multiply, to spread and stretch across the necrosis

But instead, I lay decomposing with the orange peels  
while rose thorns prick my eyes  
for now.

For some time,  
for a while.

## Night Thoughts

Kalaya Chamberlain

If I could fly away  
I'd fly above the tree line  
And touch the moon  
Letting its light be my guide through the dark

If I could swim away  
I'd swim into that sea full of stars  
Twinkling in the ocean's reflection  
Tasting their salty beauty on my lips

If I could run away  
I'd run into an empty field  
Allowing the indigo blanket to cover me  
And surround me with warmth

If I could close my eyes  
I'd keep them closed  
Until the clouds caressed my skin  
And I've become one with the sky  
I'd keep them closed



Until I was as beautiful as the night

## Untitled

Jamison Butz

I'm sorry it had to be this way...

As humans, we grow so comfortable with our current joys that when they are disturbed, it leaves one of the sharpest pains. The one you grew to love may not have said goodbye, but they gave up saying hello, wishing a good night to your grandparents is now the responsibility of the soil, and moving on from past memories is nearly inevitable...you are no longer who you used to be. Change is a glass wall that separates you from being there, forcing you to accept it, telling you that you can't make everyone happy, and no matter how hard you try to break it, the glass will never shatter at your feet and let you through. A frustration of intimations that nothing will be the same. I no longer miss the memories, but sometimes I think back on them, and I wonder where it all went wrong, which song was playing above us, which breath I took, indicating that this time has come to an end. It's like a hole in a heart, the piece missing is now lost in time, when you said your last goodbye. It's time to move on.

...remember everything happens for a reason.

## **The Ballad of Tired**

Dionisio Fowler

*“Oh, yeah. I wasn’t feeling quite myself this morning.*

*Because you’re working too hard and you need help.*

*What? Kelp? I don’t need kelp. I don’t even like seaweed.*

*Help. You need help.”*

I’m tired

It’s been a long day

A long day floating in a sea of long weeks in an ocean of long months in a world of long years

And now there is a poem I have to write

A poem, stream of consciousness.

Consciousness flowing like a river?

Why flow when you can slowly meander

Because my eyelids are so heavy

That I can’t even keep my eyes straight on this screen

That I see the words I type with slowly failing hands

That slowly fail to type what I waniytgieyudsj9woh

What is sleep?

What is tired?

What is it that compels me to write even though I should be asleep?

9:48 pm, I have another two hours and twelve minutes

Before I'm tardy, but what is tardy?

Says who, and says why?

It's really sleep now (my head)

A 1:40 inch-scale *Iguanodon bernissartensis* stares me in the eyes

He says "Write your poem, fool. I have three fingers horrifically mashed together in a strange appendage for walking on, and even I can type faster than you"

He goes out the window.

I'm tired like a car

Four tires plus a spare

I could fall asleep now

Into a dreamless slumber

I close my eyes and see colors

So many different shades of having my eyes closed

All the different palettes and colors of wanting to be asleep

But not being asleep

This is the 31st line

Of this utter nonsense

I'm tired.

**the old barn out back.**

Myah Planten

there's an old barn out back,  
all faded and dull. i watch  
it from the deck as the sky  
turns into a kaleidoscope  
and eventually fades to black.  
and i find myself wondering,  
what does it hold?  
from long since forgotten,  
made up games, and newer  
fleeting glances— at the barn  
that never moves— i wonder  
about the plastic roof, dim  
green and cracked. about the  
bright red door, with an X  
painted across, to  
the washed out yellow  
on all sides of the house.  
i wonder about the overgrown  
weeds, as thick as the forest  
floor, a thicket that layers the inside.

i wonder about the rabbits, a family  
of four, that i saw taking refuge, the last  
time I visited the old barn  
out back.

i wonder how it might've  
looked, back when it was  
the only thing to see. was the  
roof, vibrant green and unbent?  
were the walls, a bright yellow?  
did the shutters swing freely, in the  
wind?

i wonder about the old barn out back.

And i ask,  
to that old library of everything lost,  
who are you?

## **Volcanic Relationship**

Zion Zephyr Bryant

*The volcanic explosion was seen as the worst*

*Just like the yelling,*

*The screaming,*

*The fights about very small things.*

*We're sitting back here again,*

*The burning embers,*

*Dancing around me before touching my skin.*

*It burns like hot magma through rubber,*

*Like magma completely ripping through a town*

*The way you ripped through my feelings*

*And left them ignited.*

*Before we could even develop our small,*

*Fragile town,*

*The volcano, the monstrous mount of*

*Rock that sat in wait.*

*When you got sick of me trying,*

*You exploded,  
Destroying everything in your path.*

*Even then,  
I thought we could fix it all.  
I had taken for granted that maybe you didn't want to fix it,  
Maybe you wanted it all gone.*

*I never knew,  
Until I heard the crack.  
That crack of lightning shooting through your words.*

*The words, like a wild bull striking its victims,  
Hit me hard,  
Hit me fast,  
And hit me deep.*



## **We Own the Night**

Anjali Kavachery

The crisp summer night air,  
Seemed to erase the painful memories,  
And fill our minds with a hazy euphoria.

The clock was unbelievable,  
By the time it passed 1 A.M. we stopped checking,  
Opting to focus on our joyride.

Rules didn't apply to us,  
We ruled the store,  
Wielding blades of bread and riding steeds of steel.

For a few hours,  
Everything felt normal.  
It was as if there was no memorial the day before.

All we could do was enjoy the moment.

The uncontrollable laughter,  
The signature roughhousing in a Walmart at midnight,

The proud haul of Scooby Snacks and Nutella we acquired in our journey.

In the vast parking lot,

A wasteland of shopping carts and asphalt,

We sit and cheer for a night well spent.

Spoonfuls of nutella signify our joy,

As we use them instead of glasses,

*ticks* of plastic instead of *clangs* of glass.

Yet, at some point, it had to come to an end.

## **liminal space**

Shannon Cerruti

despite the night's desperate efforts  
that treasured sun did rise  
hidden behind a thick veil of milky white smog  
bleak as steady return to consciousness could be  
I lie there  
plastered to the damp ground  
with only a barrier of thin fabric  
keeping me from the grass  
each uncomfortable wrinkle painfully highlighted  
helpless to time's steady ticking  
which moved slower than ever before  
each minute the sky was shrouded in darkness  
I watched  
my brain matching the uncertain swirl of night clouds  
desperate to close my eyes  
but forced conscious  
by each fiber touching my skin  
jostling me awake  
I'm held down by an iron blanket  
invisible to my eyes but

too real in my mind  
the black giving it free rein  
over my body's ability to create  
images that aren't really there  
the night too shrouded in mystery to  
understand what is real  
with the unceasing barrage of thoughts  
I sweat trying to absorb them all but  
shiver in the cold air  
seeping through the weight that holds me down  
but despite  
the night's  
desperate efforts  
the sky started to lighten  
slowly turning from black  
to gray  
that first drop of white that dissipated in a black sky  
was the first prick of the needle  
which I knew would tether me back to reality  
around me  
shapes started to appear  
but this time familiar  
and the endless screams of the night

the loud incoherent sounds which played in my head  
began to quiet  
the night was now a memory  
the day soon to come  
and I floated  
in the space between  
hallucinations hushed but  
conscious concerns still too far to be recognized  
the horror subsides  
knowing I made it out  
but not yet on the other side

## **Real Men Like Anatomy**

Sienna Gallus

You do not  
love my body  
if you only love the pretty parts

I have no kind, blinking eyes  
nor swaying hips  
nor thighs, or lips  
If I have no muscles, no guts, no bile

You may  
love my body  
only if lungs, and veins, and brains are included

Love me for my grace, face, chest —yes  
But submerge in the circulatory flood  
and  
Love me for my blood

## **If Only**

Abigail Morris

On those days where my mother works the night shift, I find myself wandering the streets of Brooklyn going nowhere in particular. Tonight, this three-story white brick apartment complex was calling my name. There was nothing special about this building, but the fire escape was easily accessible so I thought I would give it a shot. I ascended up that rusty staircase until I reached the top, careful to not alert the neighbors that some strange girl was climbing up their home.

There are moments in life where I forget what it truly means to live, to exist in a world where you are not alone with your thoughts. It's as if the universe has expanded, to think beyond yourself is an experience like no other. I sat on the top of the apartment complex, transfixed on the vibrant glow of New York City buildings that stretched as far as the eye could see. It was like staring at a starry night sky, wondering how that radiant light came to be and how long it has until it disappears into oblivion.

From where I was sitting, I had a clear view of one woman who had her legs dangling out the window from across the street. She seemed caught up in the conversation she was having on the phone, lost within the world inside of her own head. I wonder how much I miss in just one night, how many babies are born, how many people just got married, how many times someone laughs, how just one small act makes another person's day just a little bit easier. Maybe if I paid attention enough I could notice the small things, like how many people are masking the pain with

a smile, how many people are mourning the loss of a loved one, how many hearts were broken by the people they trusted the most, and how people stay up all night wondering if anyone could ever love them the way that they deserve.

Every day there's time to mourn and a time to rejoice, every second in this world someone dies and someone is born. The universe is greater than I could ever imagine, a complex situation that I couldn't even begin to wrap my head around. But then again, I'm just one person.



## Untitled

Ashley Lebron

As I'm lying next to you, my arm pressed against yours  
I feel protected. Looking up at the dark blue sky with little twinkling lights  
that never seem to stop illuminating the sky. The feeling of the grass  
brushing up against my skin gives me goosebumps,  
you always pull me closer.  
The summer night air makes it easier to breathe somehow.  
It sings to me.

There aren't any words  
that'll bring justice to a night like this. Feeling that all of it  
brings to me. Sitting through the silence of the night, just admiring  
the land that is our earth and the infinite space of what we evidently  
know is nothing, seems to bring the stars closer to us. And with one finger  
we touch them all.

## **Guilt**

Natalie Styczynski

I hear her at night.

I hear her humming that echoes across my room.

I hear the sound of her laughter ringing in my ears

Calling me

Mocking me

I cannot stand it. Her sadistic cries that penetrate my very soul, her shallow screams that shake me to my very core.

I feel her around me

The putrid stench of her cheap perfume clinging to every wall, every surface of my room

The taste of strawberry chapstick burning on my tongue.

The shadows of her dancing across the old walls of this godforsaken house.

I feel her running her cold hands across my neck, digging them into my throat.

It is too much to bear.

She steals away my sleep each night

Dangling it just out of my reach.

And at last

I have become fed up.

With haste I make my way into my yard

Shovel tight in my hands

And with unrelenting vigor and strength

I reveal her from her resting place below.

I pour gas upon the ground

Revealing a match concealed in my hand

And I light her bed ablaze

So she can never rise again.

**my grandmother's hands still remember**

Marlee Davis

there are bloodstains  
on my grandmother's hands  
unforgiving plant  
plucked from the bush  
pricking her fingers  
puncturing her skin

years later  
she can barely  
remember my father's name  
but i know  
the memories linger.

her fingers pull at cotton-colored ghosts  
placing them in a woven basket  
only she can see,  
as she murmurs something  
only she can understand.  
i speak with her  
to no avail,

because her mind is back home for the night.

## **Rose and her Daffodils**

Bayleigh Goff

I ponder what you are doing

as I sit here and write

Tapping my dull pencil

in the still silence of the night

Are you at peace, and cocooned in your bed?

Or are you much like me, restless instead?

Are you drowning in your dreamscape

or pacing your room?

Do you bask in the midnight sun, or do you wallow in the gloom?

Are you content on the trail that you blaze,

Or will you be the one that strays?

I wonder if you loathe the monotony of day to day living.

Of 4 for 1 seed packets, clearance rack sweaters,

Pushing away from the friends that care about you most.

Are you still cowering behind the anxiety of knowing that you can do better?

I can write through the night, and never get close

to describe the bliss of when the world was ours.

I miss you the most during the midnight hours

When I'm forced to consider

if I have become bland and boring just like your window box flowers.



## **Delusion**

Madeline Foster

love is

a handful of synthetic drugs, firing neurons,

dilating pupils, a flush under the skin,

love is a chemical reaction,

a byproduct of evolution,

love is god,

and you are an atheist

you believe in love the way a child believes in Santa Claus,

the way a christian holds their bible in a hurricane,

you cling to love the way a drowned man clings to a raft,

i hate the way you love

the wide eyed wonder in which you take everything for granted,

your love is here

and then it's gone,

nothing more than a shot of adrenaline in a pure second, frozen in time

love is only a memory you look fondly upon

i hate the way you love me  
you love me like it's painful,  
you embrace me in a barbed wire grasp,  
an arrow caught in my thigh,  
i prick myself and bleed from the sharpness of your  
love  
your pathetic and uncomfortable love

true love cannot be this

love is a paradox  
a deeply complex illusion,  
a mirage granted to a lucky few lost wanderers.  
and i am left to see the horizon as it is,  
glaring in my futile way  
straight into the sun,  
burning my retinas trying to see what everyone else does  
they say love is blind,  
and now i can see why

**take me back**

Laurel Kracht

I watch myself lose you.

It's slow, at first, and bewildering,  
The way I owned you in my mind,  
How I saw you everywhere I looked;  
I thought I could hold you in the palm of my hand,  
As if I still wasn't alone  
Walking the streets at night.

I search for your eyes in strangers,  
I thought I would find you in them somehow,  
But even when I did, their smile was colder,  
Their chin too jagged,  
Still, I search, as if you're not that farther...  
But months and months go by  
soon I cannot remember your eyes,  
And my head hangs low when I walk,  
So I do not look in stranger's eyes;  
I will not find you in them.

Still, I try to hear your voice.  
I listen to you late at night,  
Records tracing you back to better times  
When we were still happy,  
When you were still fine,  
Back to when I felt alive

(Some nights I still wake up  
In tears because the truth is  
I cannot hear your voice anymore  
And I do not see your eyes  
Nor can I remember  
What exactly made me cry).

Years go by and I still search for you,  
Only in a passing thought,  
And this time I find you in the dead weight that comes and goes  
From my beating chest.  
It is only then I realize  
I have none of you left.

## Nurse's Office

Madelyn Chase

EXT. 400 METER TRACK- DAY

July, a short 16 year old with strong cheekbones and dark eyes, wears a gym class uniform. She's sprinting down the 400 Meter Track.

JULY (V.O.)

I was born at 23 weeks old. The cutoff point Forviability in premature babies is 24 weeks, so really, I should have been dead then. But I lived.

She passes a sweaty, exhausted classmate and offers them a wave. The classmate scoffs and shouts something after her. She ignores it.

JULY (V.O)

The premature thing didn't leave me too banged up. I don't have great hearing in my left ear, but that's not like, super important. My family talks loud and I'm terrible at music, so I get along.

July's gym teacher watches her suspiciously.

JULY (V.O)

I'm also hyperactive and impulsive, which my Grandma says is my Aries spirit, and my mom says is my ADHD. Could be related to the preemie thing- we don't know.

She salutes him, lazy grin never falling.

JULY (V.O)

I also have asthma, *directly* related to the preemie thing. My itty bitty baby lungs didn't get the chance to fully cook. It's a crock, though. They're fine.

She reaches her final lap and slows down, moving off the track and into the grass. Her hands grab at her knees, as she doubles over.

JULY (V.O)

*Mostly fine.*

She takes a deep breath and things start to darken. The camera falls with her as she pitches forward into the grass.

CUT TO

INT. NURSE'S OFFICE- DAY

The camera is now a handheld camcorder. July is filmed sitting up on a cot, brushing dirt off her knees.

JULY

So yeah, all things considered, I'm pretty lucky. It could have been worse. Some premature babies don't even get the chance to grow legs.

ALLISON (O.S.)

Wait that's not- that's not like a thing that happens to preemies, that didn't happen to me.

The camera swings out. Allison, 17, sits on the cot besides July. She's the picture of poised beauty. The camera focuses on her left leg, where her pants are rolled up enough to reveal a prosthetic.

ALLISON

Up here!  
(The camera pulls back)  
I was in an accident-

JULY

(behind her, mouthing)  
A premature accident-

ALLISON

And they had to sever it to save me-

JULY

Save her pride. Car wreck that big and nothing to show for it? Humiliating in the pageant circuit.

Allison smiles tightly, refusing to look away from the camera.

ALLISON

That's exactly what happened, thank you, so much, July.

July claps Allison on the shoulder with her dirt covered hand.

JULY

Don't mention it.

Allison rolls her eyes.

FLYNN (O.S)

Please, Ally-

She holds up a hand, halting flynn.

FLYNN

Please, *Allison*, don't roll your eyes. No one's gonna watch if you look bored in the first 5 minutes.

ALLISON

No one's gonna watch anyway.

July reclines on the cot, propping herself up on an elbow.

JULY

Flynn, my boy, the drama is what's gonna make people watch. If they want to think me and Ally are engaged in a turf war for the nurse's office, that's fine.

LUCAS (O.S)

That's pretty much the situation anyway.

The camera swings around to show Lucas, 16, testing his blood sugar. His eyes go wide and he rushes towards Flynn.

LUCAS

Stop filming me, jerk.

The camera drops to the ground as they wrestle for it.

FLYNN (O.S)

Get off me, you *have* to be in  
the documentary-

July picks up the camera and turns it on herself.

JULY

I'd film this WWE knockoff, but I  
think all the blood would bump  
the rating up.

ALLISON

Shut up, July.

The scene cuts.





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