

# **RUCKUS**

Winter 2019

**The Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts**

## **SUBMISSIONS GROUP**

Melanie Quakenbush

Austin Ellers

Julianne Tyler

Adiah Siler

Sirina Tiwari

## **EDITING GROUP**

Madison Stallard

Makii Smith

Sofia Barbour

Eden Bailie

Talyscha Nylet

## **MARKETING GROUP**

Aahron Abdul

Rory Pelzel

Lars Clavier

Annalyse Robison

## **DESIGN GROUP**

Leonna Griffith

Margaret Zhang

Sam Lowe

Trinity Affuso

## **ADVISOR**

Heath Mensher, M.Ed

# RUCKUS

---

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Old Water</b><br>Eden Bailie ..... 3                        | <b>Fragile Thing</b><br>Emma Engler ..... 29                |
| <b>I Wish</b><br>Shannon Cerruti..... 5                        | <b>Near Death Experience</b><br>Jamison Butz ..... 31       |
| <b>Trapped Children</b><br>Trinity Jefferson ..... 6           | <b>The Woman Tree</b><br>Isabelle Schlegel ..... 34         |
| <b>Yesterday, Fleeting</b><br>Amelia Tuerk ..... 9             | <b>True North</b><br>Parker Frank ..... 36                  |
| <b>Hourglass Grains of Sand</b><br>Sirina Tiwari ..... 11      | <b>Disillusioned</b><br>Sam Lowe ..... 37                   |
| <b>Recidivism</b><br>Trinity Affuso ..... 13                   | <b>The Cactus</b><br>Isabella Tita ..... 39                 |
| <b>Wasp</b><br>Sienna Gallus ..... 15                          | <b>Buried Treasure</b><br>Elijah Brown ..... 42             |
| <b>I'm on a Wild Goose Chase</b><br>Rebecca Haller ..... 17    | <b>Summer</b><br>Madeline Foster ..... 43                   |
| <b>Cold Sun</b><br>Abigail Morris ..... 18                     | <b>It Was Literally the Size</b><br>Margaret Zhang ..... 45 |
| <b>In Love with Myself</b><br>Grace Renaldo ..... 20           | <b>In Two Days Time</b><br>Amani Jones ..... 47             |
| <b>Fish Funeral</b><br>Lars Clavier ..... 22                   | <b>Real Estate</b><br>Madelyn Chase ..... 50                |
| <b>Grendel</b><br>Adiah Siler ..... 25                         | <b>Abstract Anthology</b><br>Elijah Siler ..... 53          |
| <b>If I Could Write Beautifully</b><br>Julianne Tyler ..... 27 | <b>If Only</b><br>Leonna Griffith ..... 55                  |

# RUCKUS

---

## Illustrators

|                         |                           |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Eden Bailie .....       | 4, 28, 41                 |
| Lars Clavier .....      | 36, 49                    |
| Emma Engler .....       | 30                        |
| Sienna Gallus .....     | 16                        |
| Leonna Griffith .....   | 33, 46, 52, 57            |
| Trinity Jefferson ..... | 8                         |
| Abigail Mahle .....     | 54                        |
| Nicole Melo .....       | 10                        |
| Isabelle Schlegel ..... | 34                        |
| Adiah Siler .....       | 26                        |
| Julianne Tyler .....    | 5, 12                     |
| Mielo Valerian .....    | 17                        |
| Margaret Zhang .....    | 14, 19, 21, 24,<br>38, 44 |

Email **RUCKUS**: [chartsmag@student.charterarts](mailto:chartsmag@student.charterarts)

## **Old Water**

Eden Bailie

i'd gotten used to slow things;  
solitude, vegetation breaking down, glass panes thinning  
but i went west and hit pavement  
cracked by earthquakes and agave plants spitting out yellow  
seeds  
into heat that made hair go grey and curl  
like week-old sage taken from the desert  
and brought back to burn.

and then back again, slowly,  
feeling my burnt skin peel around new jewelry and shed an  
old self  
glad to return to small things, bright eyes;  
salmon with silver bellies against the current  
that leads to dirty, hot water and is made clear, and still,  
returning as the snow that falls in powder and silences the  
pines,  
over the horses that stand like ink in puddles of cream.



## I Wish

Shannon Cerruti

I wish I could touch the sky.  
Float amidst its vast blue  
into an endless chasm of space  
to explore a world full of stars  
I want to fly with the birds  
face the warm rays of the sun  
and the cool glow of the moon  
Curl up and sleep with the clouds.  
But I'm just a flower  
and we will never be together.



I wish I could feel the ground.  
Stick my fingers into the damp soil  
breathe in the fragrance  
of every vibrant plant  
Escape from this cold empty chasm  
to lay my face on the warm sand  
Feel river rapids glide across my feet  
and lie in a field of flowers.  
but I'm just a cloud  
and we will never be together.

## **Trapped Children**

Trinity Jefferson

I ponder on the thought

If you will ever know what dirt feels like, young child

If this world actually allows you to be a child

You might even know what it tastes like

We went from playing with action figures

To four year old children throwing temper tantrums

Begging you to buy an upgrade for the game they play  
online

Young fool,

I'm not trying to intentionally hurt your feelings

But society has brought you up

To not feel feelings

But to lean on technology

Everything is digital

I hope you know playgrounds are actually real

And it is not just a place

You take your Sims character to

Young child,  
I wonder if you'll grow up  
and still have the scar on your left knee  
When you scraped it on the stinging pavement.  
Mid-October playing hide and seek  
I wonder if you'll know what it's like to play hide and seek  
With people who aren't armed with weapons  
Because today  
You could just be breathing  
And a bullet will seek you  
But you'll be too busy engrossed into a device  
As your hands grasp the sleek silver for dear life  
You don't know how to hide

Shame  
Shame on us  
For not protecting you  
For not teaching you how to live life  
And the worst thing isn't when the battery dies  
But it's September 16th.  
A week before summer ends  
Outside  
Playground

Park

You must go inside when the sky starts to get dark  
As the streetlights come on  
And air feels more brisk

Young fool,

It's not your fault

We haven't experienced the same things as kids

I wouldn't dare ask for forgiveness

Because you wouldn't know what forgiveness is

The only way you know how to express yourself is through  
social media

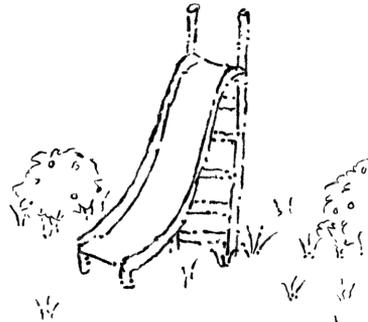
And screen to screen conversations

I wonder one day

You won't ever see a face in person besides your own

But it won't be your true reflection

It'll just be you trapped into a cell phone.



## **Yesterday, Fleeting**

Amelia Tuerk

In the deep blueness of the ocean She saw the reflection of Yesterday, his face changing as the tide came in and out. The constancy of the waves drew Her to the beach that first night. She, in awe, moved towards the water. The foam swallowed Her ankles, then Her calves, Her thighs, Her hips. Lit only by the steady lighthouse, She floated out on the waves. The sea is unforgiving most nights, but She was oh so pitiful in this moment, that even the ocean helped to return Her home. The shore took Her by the hand and folded Her into the sand, hoping to help Her forget.

It was hard to forget, though, how Yesterday had come and gone all too quickly. She had yearned for him for so long, and while he must have known, She had never told him. She had felt so at peace with him, presumably he had with Her, and yet suddenly Yesterday disappeared almost overnight. She had held onto him tightly, yes, but is that why he had gone? It was hard to say. She often found Herself awake too late at night, thinking of the moments they could have shared, had he not fallen away from Her in the manner he had. Try, She still does, shooting salutations aimlessly into space, wondering if one might boomerang

back. They do, sometimes, and She is hopeful. But Yesterday never lasts. She and Yesterday do not cross paths as often as they used to. Do not catch each other's eyes in the same way as before. Yesterday claims he likes to hear from Her, but She never hears from him. Oh, has Yesterday ever lasted? Was Yesterday a mere hope, caught in Her hands, and held onto even after he had melted away?

Tonight She wades too far. Once Her toes are lifted from the seafloor, She floats out once again. The ocean carries Her as far as it can, but soon She sinks. Salt crusts Her eyelids as She falls asleep against the wet, ever moving sand. She opens Her eyes to look for him once more. Through the surface of the sea She can see his smile in mismatched constellations. Yesterday was never going to stay, nor would he promise to. He was bound to leave, but She had known him. It was all She had truly wanted, and so She falls asleep, lungs one with the water. Above Her, Yesterday looks outward over the waves. He refuses to dip his feet. Yesterday is afraid of being pulled out, caught in the endlessness of the ocean. She is asleep now, just out of his sight, and he goes home.



## **Hourglass Grains of Sand**

Sirina Tiwari

My grandmother hugs me tight as if I am fragile like sand.  
Fragile enough to slip before her fingers and fall into the  
floorboards.

She wraps me up in subtle perfumes of cha cha's curry  
powder and shea butter lip balm.

We fall into each other's arms, after a tiring return.

I am her country girl, her little explorer and rule breaker.

I run up the floors of her old house and snoop through  
drawers of old cough drops and caramel candies.

She leaves her arms around me for some time, enough to feel  
her sunken cheeks on my shoulder.

My grandmother stares down at my long hair and continues  
on about putting coconut oil on my split ends.

She grabs her own dry grey locks, and with a sigh, she says,  
“Ahh to be youthful again.”

But she is youthful to me.

Youthful in the way she spends her mornings swimming

her evenings gardening, digging deep into the earth

She is youthful in the night when we sit in her sunroom

eating homegrown raspberries and talking about our God.

My Grandma continues to wrap me up in love and when I

am as fragile as sand

she holds each one of my grains above the floor boards.



## **Recidivism**

Trinity Affuso

re-cid-i-vism

/rə'sidə,vizəm/

*noun*

the tendency of a convicted criminal to reoffend.

your legs tangled around mine,  
our lips touching as you speak  
“we’re bad people, aren’t we?”  
holding on to lost love you’s in the night  
leaves me in the day a slave to the blue  
but i pay on, we play on this little game  
do you remember when we didn’t have to hide?

lord just let me fall out of love

i’m collapsing

*collapsing*

*collapsing*

*collapsing*

hushing each other, kisses through the night

i don't miss the fights but a wound is forming from the bite  
what ever gave us the right to hold on and lie?  
disturbing desires and truths spoken in the night

lord just let me fall out of love

i'm collapsing

*collapsing*

*collapsing*

*collapsing*

is our status payback? self sabotage? are we really gone?

i don't know where i stand but i know this isn't moving on

"i'm breaking my own heart"

our lips touching as you speak

"we're bad people"

We sin, We sin, We sin, We sin



## **Wasp**

Sienna Gallus

Even the bumble and honey tempt to trouble her  
though, she was partial to their creation  
The garden lay untouched then,  
except by little legs in three pairs

She watches from the window,  
pressing skin against glass, she's reflecting  
and peering out onto the sweet alyssum  
down the path, with the thistle and bees

still, the forever hum of their wings  
still, the forever uneasiness the buzz brought

trowel in hand,  
eyes peeled for small yellow bodies  
Flower in the other  
Primed for the sting and waiting and expecting

The rhythmic rumble never came that day  
from beneath the surface, they rested in the earth

Yet she looked to the sky and about the nooks of trees  
The bees overhead, never aiming to harm

So, the Anthophila and Riona can exist  
together among the lilac  
And the wasp may keep to its own underground  
until she goes digging again



**i'm on a wild goose chase**

Rebecca Haller

im on a wild goose chase

im on a wild goose chase  
my third repeat of easter morning  
going 50 on a 35  
and i don't feel like stopping

he told me hit the brakes  
that tomorrow will be christmas  
that every bullet will miss  
but he's never seen me buck-wild

in a pour down, windows up  
my last dinner was thanksgiving  
my first hit and run never felt so free  
you bet i'm going to do it again

he said the skid marks faded since the fourth  
that he didn't want to celebrate his birthday  
and the arrow he shot last fall  
only came back to surprise me



## **Summers aren't supposed to feel like this**

Abigail Morris

Summers aren't supposed to feel like this.

Summers are those careless days when you break away from the routine to enjoy your life. Summers aren't the time to be scared to fall asleep because you're afraid that you're Dad might kill Mom after having one too many. Summers nights aren't those nights you would pray that Mom and Dad could love each other again, but you know that it would never happen when you heard the police sirens in the distance.

My dreams of our family becoming whole were whisked away with the autumn breeze. I haven't seen Dad, and I know that I don't want to see him either. The closest that I've ever been with him in my life was when he placed his pasty, wrinkled hands against the glass window in the prison visitation room in mid-August.

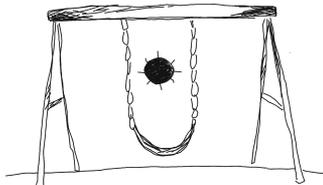
I don't see Mom anymore, either, she's always working. The only time I see her is when she's passed out on the couch at two in the morning after working both the morning and night shift. "Go to college," she mutters, "Don't end up like me."

Calm, snowy nights are the only nights I see my mother now. Instead of curling up on the couch, we curl up with a bottle of Jack. One time, she told me that she wishes she owned a fireplace. Not to cuddle with a cup of hot chocolate like we did at Dad's house, but to burn the bills that our landlord keeps sending us.

During the spring is when the roof of our apartment really starts leaking. We've already run out of buckets to place around the living room, so we've decided to use beer bottles instead to save money.

I usually find myself in the park during those days where it's just drizzling. If I'm lucky enough, I'll see that one happy family that always says hi to me as I walk by. Whenever I see them, I always feel a twinge of jealousy. Maybe it's towards the parents, whose eyes light up with what I assume to be love, every single time they make eye contact. Or maybe it's at the child, whose joyful laugh echoes through the park, reminding me of how I was younger.

God, I wish it was summer.



## **In love with myself**

Grace Renaldo

I'm at a point in my life where  
I am finally starting to love myself  
I look in the mirror and like what I see  
My hazel eyes entrances to who  
I want to be  
And the freckles on my face; a sliver of the  
Masterpiece in which I am  
Never before have I loved myself  
Never before have I felt this way about me  
I have been beaten and bruised by the  
Words of people that say they hate me when in  
Reality they just want to be me.  
They want my contagious laugh that brings smiles  
To other faces  
They want my confidence that has been  
Broken but is now a stone wall and their  
Words that seemed like bullets  
Now end up as feathers  
Their words don't affect me for I am proud of how I look  
These stretch marks and rolls don't define who I am  
My double chin means double personality

The bigger I am, the more beauty I hold  
No one can stop me for I am proud of the woman I am  
becoming  
I am free of the chains of hate and self deprecation  
That held to the ground for so long  
For I am beautiful  
I am talented  
Because finally, I am in love with myself..



## **Fish Funeral**

Lars Clavier

there was a market on the piers  
a big fish funeral  
I thought it like

but the fishermen wore  
yellow overalls and red caps  
I liked that they looked like gnomes

Mumi had her own stand  
for her plant remedies  
and I'd sit with her  
and watch

later she sent me around with a list  
and a jingling embroidered purse  
cheese mushrooms berries  
cardamom bread

I wondered if the fishermen thanked the fish  
if they were ever thankful

and I hoped my heart out  
that not a single fish would go to waste  
and doubted it so.

I was very tired, always  
those mornings at the market

so tired that there weren't too many  
thoughts in my brain and I felt a bit  
outside of myself  
a ghostwalker  
as those feelings floated about  
tinny and scratchy and stormlike and  
mourning sloshing beneath the boards we walked on

and I never understand Mumi's questions  
the first time she asks them.

*Do you think fish get sad about death like we do?*

Mumi regards me with a strange look --  
one of her special looks -- the look she gives me  
when she's about to tell me a story.

*Yes, I think they do.*

I think about it.

*So much that you can feel it?*

The bedroom where my mother used to sleep, when we still had a house, felt like that.

You'd step inside, even for a moment, and the sadness was all over you.

Mumi asks if I feel fish grief. And yeah, I really think I do.



## **Grendel**

Adiah Siler

The monster grabs the forest floor snake to hiss to  
When no one will stay long enough to hear his outburst.

I painted my nails black and violet (even the ugly finger)  
to prepare for the night:

First we (I) shiver even under three blankets.

Then I (we) swallow every one of my fingers and

Wait for summer to end.

So much shame in one body, she says,

Maybe that's why you're so big.

Cry on stage like it's a movie, being sick is ugly.

No camera when the knife feels like

A sixth finger.

No booing audience when you can't make yourself  
stand up in the shower (the water has gone cold by now),  
stand up in the shower, can't find the power,  
stand up in the, can't find the power, stand up,  
just stand the hell up you've done it before.

The snakes that I grab:  
My own palms hard against my forehead, cheeks,  
till they're stinging pink.  
My brother watches, turns away.

My eyelids,  
painted for a Friday-Night-In with candle wax.

To the passing creature that I pick up off my  
kitchen floor,  
I groan a whisper, spittle-wet song,  
full throttle neck choke broke,  
broken English,  
teary eyed rage, red-cheeked embarrassment,  
vodka burping,  
the eye strain,  
the lift of the leg,  
palms on cheeks, eyes to mirror, hand to throat

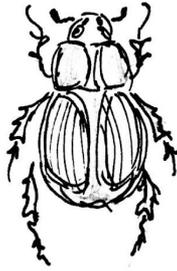
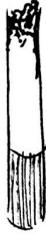
The snake hisses and slithers away.  
My voice sounds garbled in my own ears.



## **If I Could Write Beautifully**

Julianne Tyler

I wish I could write beautifully.  
if I could,  
I would sew words into silk.  
I would make them as warm as the sun,  
casting shadows over coffee filters in the morning.  
I would compare you to my dirty hands,  
wet and slick with mud from weeding all afternoon.  
I would find some sort of beauty in you,  
say you left because the autumn wind  
swept you away in a cluster of burgundy leaves,  
say our love simply changed with the seasons.  
write it off as a paradox of time: sad, but amazing.  
I would act like the cosmos wrote us in them-  
thrusting us together in a burst of euphoria  
that peaked and then fell.  
but that would be a lie.  
I met you, loved you,  
and you took that,  
twisted it into the ground like a roach,  
and sauntered away,  
as unaffected as you always were.



## **Fragile Thing**

Emma Engler

I almost ran over a chipmunk, which made me almost get hit by a car. The man in the black Nissan honked the horn and I just waved. Not even five minutes of skateboarding, and I already had narrowly avoided death. My gaze drifted back down to the chipmunk. It sat directly upright, right next to the white line. At first, I thought it was dead; stiff in the gravel and brush on the side of the road. I just assumed someone had hit it, which was all too common around here. The amount of roadkill on these windy country roads is incredible and disgusting. But then it breathed.

It took shallow quick breaths, the kind that made you just as scared as the creature. It was so small, the size of a baby. Dirt and grit were matted in its fur and its stubby tail was limp. It shook ever so slightly, and much to my amazement, stayed frozen even as I approached. I squatted down right beside it, and still it didn't run. There was no blood, and all its limbs seemed intact. So why did this little thing stay so still?

“Hey, buddy,” I breathed, scooting even closer. I wanted to scoop it up and hold it in the palm of my hand,

but who knew what kind of diseases it might have carried. The fragile thing was so helpless it made an odd part of me hurt. The chipmunk was still frozen. Its breathing and twitching nose were the only things that kept me there. I found a thin twig and gently poked at its side, hoping to scare it off. It wasn't natural for wild animals to act like this so close to humans, and it scared me. Instead of running, it fell over. Anxiety suddenly rushed through me, as I tried to get it back into its original position. I never quite got it back right, but it was enough that my guilt subsided slightly.

There really wasn't much I could do. I just wanted to go for a nice relaxing ride, but now I was sad. I knew this was how nature worked, but this guy touched me in a place most things didn't. After a moment of contemplation, I continued to skateboard down the dusty road. If the chipmunk was still there when I got back, and still alive, I'd get a box. But then what? It probably wouldn't even make it through the night. But it soon didn't matter anyway. When I got back, it was gone.



## **Near Death Experience**

Jamison Butz

I met a boy today  
Everything about him seemed  
unpredictable  
He came out of nowhere  
like a sickness

He gave me a flower  
dehydrated and wilted  
but romantic I suppose  
He wore a hood and  
the shadow erased his face

We went to his place  
after the sun fell and  
the sky was a dark void  
hovering over the late night fog

The walls of his room were black  
they seemed to close in on me  
stealing my air  
asphyxiating me

I needed to escape  
He asked what the rush was  
I told him that it wasn't  
the right time for me to be with him

*Well that's too bad* his voice cracked  
traveling to my heart  
aching me like what  
I imagine a heart attack feels like

Before I turned away  
dizzy and anxious  
He asked for my name  
I told him and waited for him  
to pay me back with his

He kissed my cheek  
whispered his name in my ear  
painful chills lingering on my skin  
pricking me like needles stabbing

I met a boy today  
He goes by Death  
*I'll see you soon* he says  
and that was the last I heard of him  
for now



## **The Woman Tree**

Isabelle Schlegel

She is decorated  
with rope vines, all tied  
along Her branches and  
torch marks, singed with  
flaking charcoal dust  
and ash

s p i n s  
it dirties the air  
around Her.

our black feet  
d a n c e  
patting down and  
stomping in  
new dirt,  
to help Her grow again.

Mr. Wind is tiresome  
in His vain attempts  
to blow Her down,



His weights of rope are

h

e

a

v

y

and are the causation  
of Her frown.

...and yet.

and yet *She still stands*

and yet *We still dance*

and We throw our tears

of laughter

at the terrible wind

That cursed our names-

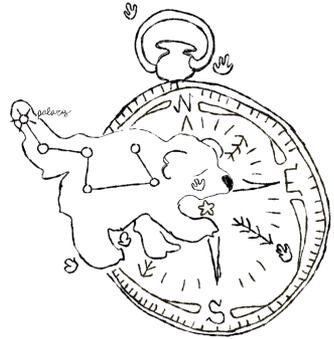
“Witch”

“Bitch”

## True North

Parker Frank

My love, I fear im going crazy  
Crazy in the 3,306 miles of ocean between us  
You make me feel in every shade of violet  
And with every wave that crashes on the shore  
I want to jump in and swim to you  
Or scream from the top of my lungs  
I fear i'm going to snap  
Right in half  
Like a bone between your teeth  
I am all stretched out elastic  
And burning rubber without you  
You're the only religion  
I'd ever bow my head to  
Here it seems everyone loves me  
But your heart is the one i want to have  
I hate everything in this stupid town  
Does escaping to the city sound good to you?  
I'd follow you anywhere, through trenches and warzones  
I fear without you, i'll come undone  
I've been losing my sense of direction  
Can you be my true north?



## **Disillusioned**

Sam Lowe

she said i was overreacting  
when i said that ostrification  
wore me down like corroded stone  
and muddled me into a gully  
of murky deterioration that reeked of  
desperation and  
subsides my body and atomizes my mind.

she said that i was definite.  
my fate was sealed and that her God had a plan for  
me.  
i don't have a plan for me.  
so how could He?

i told her that i was miniscule,  
as was she.  
she told me i was pessimistic.  
i told her i was realistic.

she called me nihilistic.  
i called her thomistic,  
unlike i.

days passed into weeks and i  
found myself inundated within trenches of bodies  
like massacred individualism decimated in wars of man on  
Man.

canteened bodies filtered like water sit pocketed  
in receptacles left in hot, heavy cars next to dogs and a  
child's forgotten chocolate milk.  
sickly sour curdles swirl to the top of the plastic container,  
similar to acute stark personality complications that have  
colludedly disheveled themselves and  
turned me as useless as  
sour milk.



## **The Cactus**

Isabella Tita

I

I promise

I won't come to bite

My flowers bloom

Please stay the night

II

Why, when you think of flowers' bloom

Do you envision forests?

You never see the work I've done

I really do protest

III

I've seen the horrors

Of snakeskins' past

Blowing through the night

So if you approach

Please, do it slowly

I'm too afraid you'll bite

VI

Each night it's cold

I start to shiver

No one to hold

I curse fate's river

V

I'm seen as a symbol

A symbol of hate

My spikes aren't of malice

I'm fighting my fate

VI

My insides are soft

From the troubles I've seen

I bathe in the water

Try to keep myself clean

But I've seen those who've died

Drown deep in the sand

Please come a little closer

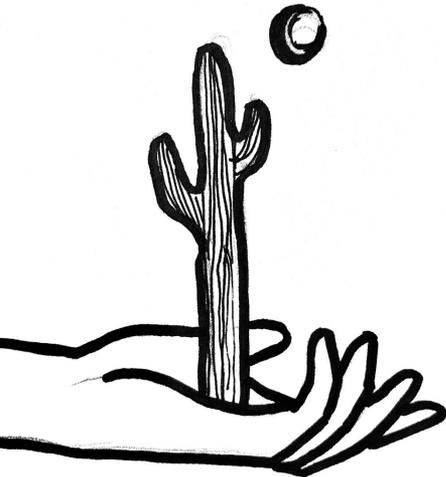
Please give me your hand

VII

She dances between  
Danger and desire  
She craves others' touch  
But she plays with the fire

VIII

Her smile is wide  
What a shark-toothed grin  
Inside she is love  
Outside she is sin



**Buried Treasure**

Elijah Brown

*X*

## **Summer**

Madeline Foster

Summer is an ugly rotting fruit no one wants to look at or  
throw away,  
Its sweet stench attracts scavengers for miles,  
It lingers on the edge of perfect sweetness and falls into a pit  
of decadent debauchery and impulse.  
Summer is marked by cheap plastic fans that buzz and  
churn the thick air like swamp water,  
By mosquitoes like criminals in the night that are found  
clustered fat, gluttonous, and dead on sticky plastic paper  
hanging from the ceiling by morning,  
Summer is mania, delirium, and heatwave mirages  
shimmering over melting asphalt  
Summer is growing pains,  
It is red lipstick smeared on a coffee cup,  
Thin line of white powder like a lightning flash,  
Bead of sweat rolling down the side of a breast, a rib cage,  
Smoky bathroom stalls and lies,  
Rain-soaked notebooks -  
Gum wrapper joints and tomato jars full of cash  
Tossed out aprons and fireworks  
Summer is heartbreak like mold on bathroom tile

Feminine bodies curled around each other  
-sisterhood,  
Homemade tattoos and overwhelming city heat,  
Bleach powder blue skies and dead lavender flower sunsets,  
Stolen Revlon lipstick in the shade Harlot,  
Bucket list abortions as written by Allan Ginsberg,  
Forsaken expectations and the bitter twist of sarcastic lips  
Sandpaper sunburns that itch like betrayal,  
Hot and heavy raindrops and freezing cold shopping malls,  
Summer is the dead flies you find on your overripe  
strawberries.



**it was literally the size of my hand oh my god just  
crawling across the tracks**

Margaret Zhang

something messed up about  
writing and writing and writing  
about my self, my art  
until the meaning is sucked away  
into a cold calculating world  
new york city subway rats  
orange brick facility and soundstages  
fancy school.  
i am losing sight of reality  
always knew i wanted to go to college  
but why?  
hundred thousands just to know some people  
just to be in an industry that should care about untold  
stories  
but became greedy greedy money hungry  
nothing matters except money  
i wish i could be farm lesbian living in meadow  
shearing sheep and perfecting chickpea eggs  
no. i've carved out my path with iron dagger  
now it's filled with reels and screens and overzealous men

who always get the attention  
so i am scared. still so young  
the unknown of the future  
im losing sight of reality  
already tired of this world  
and i tell myself- i do this for art, for my culture, for  
invisible voices  
so i write and write and write  
to new york city subway rats



## **In Two Days Time**

Amani Jones

I awoke to the wooden doors of my closet

Imprinted with a reflection of my windows under the rising  
sun

I snapped a photograph

Realizing how each Saturday morning is not greeted by such  
a sight

My father, downstairs fixing an early meal

My mother, snoring wildly with her black curls sprawled  
about her pillowcase

My animals lying comfortably, waiting for their eyes to  
adjust to the new morning:

The hamster

Shuffling quietly underneath his fluffy blue bedding

The lizard

Resting gently upon his wooden log

The dog

Stretching upwards and downwards until all the tension in  
her little muscles and bones has been released

I lift my arms above my head to do the same

And my stiff back cracks like the sound of baseballs meeting  
wooden bats while the young boys and girls practice in the  
field that sits just behind my home

I will never tire of chirping sparrows and other little birds  
that sing to each other, competing to sound prettier than  
the other

All the while the reflection of the sunlight on my closet  
door has lowered and now bleeds onto the adjacent wall

Where the sun has decided she would like to stay

The scent of the bitter coffee from just downstairs fills my  
nostrils and makes my eyes water

And one of the three petals left on my dying sunflower falls  
to the floor

I await the autumn air to blow a breeze upon my skin

And the leaves come forth to whisk away the pollen and  
shriveled hydrangeas

Too many days have been spent with exposed arms and legs  
being the only form of comfort

It has become time for heaters, gourds, and fingerless  
mittens

And barren trees to shake their thin limbs in the wind

And as my praise for this lovely morn' comes to a close  
I hope for many more like these  
More filled with a pen on the brink of death and  
scrambling to find a page that has not been ruined by  
unconscious scribbles and conscious thoughts  
A morning where cars glide by swiftly,  
Saving their honking horns out of respect for those sleeping  
A morning when a woman walking by mutters,  
“Okay...I love *you*, bye” before hanging up her phone  
A morning when the clouds have parted perfectly and the  
sun is front and center, stretching her rays from  
Person  
To  
Treetop  
To  
Stray cat  
And the reflection of her light shines onto me.



## **Real Estate**

Madelyn Chase

Dark in the day is the night in the day. You wake up in silence. You pull down on the light above your mattress in silence. The fluorescents burn your eyes in silence. You pull the light back off and drag the covers up over your head.

Eventually, it is time to wake. Your alarm clock shakes so loud and so hard and for so long that it rumbles itself off of your bedside table. You can't find it in the darkness. You must brave the fluorescents again.

Your dining partner is the sound of wet chewing. It reverberates all through the house. You'd think a pig was getting into the slop. You wish you lived on a sweet little farm like Wilbur.

On the way to the bathroom a tall shadow stands, staring at you. You almost piss yourself a few feet from the toilet. What a disappointment to find that it is not a man, but your clean clothes, moth eaten to the very bone. When is the last time you put away the laundry?

The bathroom has another set of fluorescents. As you relieve yourself, you count the tiles. They are white,

speckled with hair dye. It doesn't come out, no matter how hard you scrub. The shower curtains are growing mold.

You crawl back into bed and you wake up the next morning and it's still dark. What do trivialities like morning and night matter anymore? You smash your alarm clock with the meat tenderizer as you cook.

Your kitchen is dim. You turn on the overhead stove light and leave the fridge open. All of the cold air is escaping, leaving mist pouring out into the house, but at least you can see the cookies you're baking.

"They're chocolate chip with pretzels and browned butter," you'd say, if anyone cared to ask, "my mother's recipe."

But nobody does, and so you say nothing.

You plop down the dough and push it into the oven. The fridge door is shut and you go to sit in the TV room.

The DVD spins and spins and spins. *Seinfeld* plays. *Seinfeld* had windows and he was the worst. You deserved windows, didn't you? Didn't you?

You get so upset that you crack the TV.

The oven timer goes off. Through the darkness, you follow the smell of cookies back to the kitchen. When

you take them out, you forget to slip on an oven mitt. Flesh bubbles up on your fingers. You grab a pot holder with your good hand. You drop the tray on the table.

You eat a cookie from your shining, wounded hand. You put the rest into some tupperware from the overhead cabinets, the ones painted orange. They do not match the rest of the house.

Mail slides in through the front door as you're closing the cabinets. You race to it and push the flap open to watch the mailman retreat. He's wearing grey socks today. How unusual, how very strange. You slide down against the wood and rip open the mail and oh-

Another pink slip.

You know what they say: "When God closes a door, He opens a window."

You think that maybe God is dead.



## **Abstract Anthology**

Elijah Siler

sweet jam

you were piss in a jar  
on the side of the highway,  
i was a bird pecking at the red lid  
hoping to find sweet jam inside

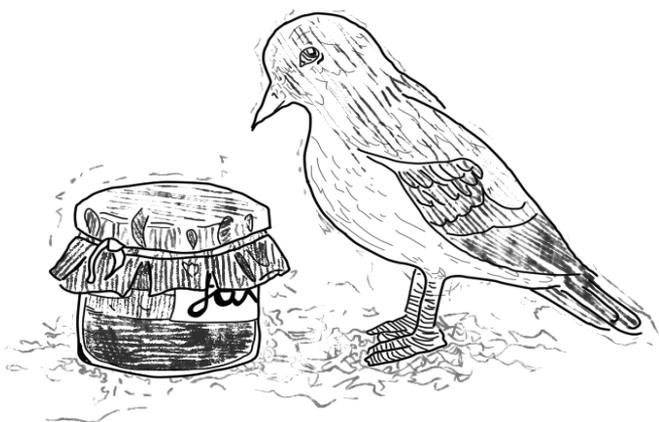
-

limbo

a game of to and fro  
all at once  
slows

held by the nape  
swinging as would a pendulum  
snared by the strings of blind fate,  
a cat seeks refuge in his box.  
unlocked in two days time or maybe more

before i have the chance to comprehend  
the whistle blows  
and i am thrown



**if only**

Leonna Griffith

fear makes me want to listen to music in the dark.  
no street lamps, no headlights,  
just the moon  
and the stars, if they wish.

there's something about the absence of light  
that amplifies things,  
fills me with that calming static buzz,  
gifts the sound waves a physicality,  
and holds me ever so tightly  
as i press repeat, repeat, repeat.

the light we see when we close our eyes  
in pitch darkness is ingenuine.  
it's our instinct to find light wherever we are  
and it's our instinct to be afraid of the dark.  
it's why we spark fires  
despite the risk of burning  
precious flesh.

sometimes i think i was born in the wrong world.

if i was born somewhere else, i'd be a fairy!  
my hair would be pink, naturally.  
pink of tenderness, of empathy, of soul,  
and the love from my heart would pulsate  
pure white light.

light that would fill my lungs to the very brim,  
creep up my throat,  
and drip out of the cracks of my smile.  
light that would squeeze out of my eyes  
teardrops crafted by my deepest,  
purest sentiments.

those tears would drip onto the ground  
that settles soundly beneath me.  
light so bright that the dark would be reduced to a fable,  
disappearing completely  
even when the sun goes down.

my purpose would be served,  
and there'd be nothing to fear any more.

