

RUCKUS

Student Literary Arts Magazine



WINTER 2021

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RUCKUS

Winter 2021

The Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Arts

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RUCKUS

America's ...

Zoe Lachter.....2

Leaves Flutter Down

Alina Bezenyan.....4

Nutrition/Drug Facts

Sienna Gallus.....6

50¢

Jesse Graham.....7

An Era

Sarah Montimaire.....8

Lightning Love

Ruth Hamilton.....11

the ornaments

Mia Maginnis.....12

garden of virtue

Audrey Crocco.....14

Musician

Basil Nussbaum.....15

A Grove

David Fadem.....17

Sublime at Rock ...

Dillon Corwin.....18

Skin

Mal Vaughn.....20

pre made happy place

Madison Bold.....21

Midnight Offerings ...

Amani Jones.....22

Tiny Roaches

Aidan Brockelman...23

Mother of the Valley

Alyson Van Dusen.....24

But Life Went On

Bryanna Tavarez.....26

So much depends on ...

Theo Veluz.....28

Eyeballs

Amelia Tuerk.....30

Flower

Brandon Bracero.....31

posthumousloveofa...

Jamison Butz.....33

Moon Pie

Angelina Whitaker.....35

I wrote this poem and I ...

Mars Leonard.....36

Cloud Watching

E.K. Engler.....39

An Untitled Poem ...

Vinny Cyr.....40

Reverie

Myah Planten.....41

Devour: A Lovers' ...

Devynn Swasey.....44

Goodbye Pedestrian

Dejai Torres.....46

Revolt of the Butterfly ...

Bianca Felix.....48

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.

America's Homelessness Crisis Among Bugs

By Zoe Lachter

I am well versed in the art of
luring spiders onto newspapers.

I was the sister who didn't mind

I'd take them to the backyard.

Slide them off onto branches
leaves.

At my old house they just went on the porch
or the sidewalk
or the front stoop.

Stone and concrete
was the jungle I had available
for my destitute arachnids.

When I was eleven I got
a spider bite on my left pinkie and
my whole hand swelled up

red and numb

for four days.

After that, I always let my mom
put on those clunky black clogs
she bought for work and
wait for eight legs and the sole to
collide.

There was always a winner

In the winter
the new house is so much warmer
than the old one ever was.

Back then, I figured in or out was
all about the same,
really.

Now, sometimes
I just let them stay inside
the spiders

I have 20 more degrees
to share.

But I swear to god if that thing gets anywhere near me I'll
crush it

Leaves Flutter Down

By Alina Bezenyan

We find that as our hope slowly seeps into the soil
That the leaves flutter down
The sunlight that once led us to prosper
Is now simply getting us by
The weeds are uprooted and thrown away
But isn't it funny how they always grow back?
Back to take from us again
And again
And again the leaves flutter down

The rain that once kept us going
Is now never enough
It seems that the rain is helping the weeds as well
The bark ages and we become wiser
Our leaves flutter and we become aware
The seasons change
The sunlight helps us less
The rain has others to attend to
Our lost hope is tainting the soil again
And again
And again our leaves flutter down

We cannot go on

We cannot live on

We cannot survive

In a place where a tree like us cannot thrive

It is these selfish thoughts that consume us as we wilt

But there is something we cannot see as the last leaves
flutter down

Nutrition/Drug Facts

By Sienna Gallus

Drug Facts	
Prescribed antidepressant 90 servings per bottle Active ingredient	∞ refills left Fluoxetine Hydrochloride
Amount per serving Serotonin Inhibitor	10mg
I get so tired	of looking up the side effects
Things are so cloudy	<i>Google, is it normal?</i>
Distorted, warped	<i>Is it normal?</i>
I never really wake up normal? Is it normal? Is it normal?	<i>Is it normal? Is it</i>
I sit in the	
Bathtub	I cannot feel
I fold my laundry	I cannot feel
You kiss me	I cannot feel
<i>I thought this was supposed to make me better?</i>	
Side Effects may include: nausea, vomiting, headaches, weight gain, psychosis, nightmares (so many nightmares), emotional bluntness, insomnia, disassociation, anxiety, suicidal thoughts	
Contact your medical care provider if you experience any of these symptoms But it won't matter No pill can fix me	
*Daily Value:	I don't know anymore
I'm still sick	but I can't feel it

50¢

By Jesse Graham

It's only 50¢ to punch the clown.
You can punch any clown you want.
The clown in the circus with a big red nose,
The clown selling you food,
The clown talkin about society,
The clown who thinks she loves him,
The clown in office sending our troops to die for nothing,
The clown who wrote this poem,
Or you can punch the clown reading this but
Remember it's 50¢ to punch the clown

An Era

By Sarah Montimaire

Pink sheets tossed across the bed
Her legs were curled atop the covers
Because she couldn't find them at night with a pen in her
hand.

Black tar felt the ridges of the rolling wheels
Picking up speed
Then being stopped by changing lights

Cool air was all around her
But she couldn't take it in
Just felt it against her face as she rushed by,
Her lungs could only grab short spurts,
All that air filled up her head
And she rode the wind like she had wings.

She liked how the colors blended together as she flew by
Pale skies, and brown oaks
Waiting for the right time to bloom with rich greens
But for now all the colors were blending together
Barely allowing her to taste the reds, the browns, and the
stones together.

Pink sheets black tar
Pale skies and brown oaks
Pink sheets black tar pale skies brown oaks
pink sheets black tar pale brown oaks

She fell down a rabbit hole and felt peace in every moment,
I let it consume me,
She did the same things again

And again
And again
Wrapped in pink sheets again
Thoughts flew out her head
Into the wind expecting her to chase them
She wanted to go outside to catch them
But it was never worth it.

I remembered it rained a lot
Yet the summer sun still made me hazy
Everytime i would go out for a walk
I took shade in the trees
Found comfort in the green
I looked up saw through the cracks a bright light
The sun.
How badly i wanted to reach that
But the green kept me grounded

As the sky would open up
I would just hide a little more
I tried to blend In but I wore a bright orange sweater with
Holes in its sleeve And a stretched out hood,
I just wanted to breathe among the trees.

I thought about running away
As I looked down that path
A broken snapple bottle made of glass
The wind would whistle
The woods were too loud
And yet calm
But I was too unstable for it
I am bright flames

And it would burn at my touch
Turn to ash and leave me
Just as thoughts did
To me.
Just as my breath did
To me.
Just as my dreams began to fade with the summer heat
I inhaled crisp air
And watched the rain trample a flower
And the water flow down the street

everything must fall.
We spilled ink all over our pages
We forgot about icarus
We Blurred the lens Scratched out our names from the script
and Forgot all of our lines
He flew too close to the sun,
His wings burned
And he fell to his death.

All the blues that were once bright,
all the reds that were so violently vibrant
Were gone.
we tried so hard not to let the sun catch us
she let everything around her fall
i used everything i had to protect her
but still the flames burned us

Lightning Love

By Ruth Hamilton

Follow me, my love;
Take my hand as we prance through
The dreary darkness
Tucked between the aureate trees,
Feel the subtle crunch of leaves
Beneath your feet as you
Twirl me in motion with the clouds
While the somber skies ignite with striking force
Look into my soul as the forest erupts
In cracklin siler flames;
Count the constellations in my eyes
As i watch stormy shadows
Dance across your face;
My love, get lost with me
Among the tender pouring rains
And let uts be the beauty
Found only within autumns wake
But never may we fall

the ornaments

By Mia Maginnis

as an ornament, i hang
my fragility both a weapon and a shield
upon first glance my body warns you
to proceed with caution

hold me gently, yet firmly in your grasp
gentle enough not to crush me
like the dried petal of a rose
firm enough as to not let my smooth exterior
slip between your calloused fingers

but roses too, come from the strong
from the resilient shrub, armed with thorns
just as your calloused fingers reach
from the rugged hands of Man

but it matters not where i am from
or how my curves were crafted from love
for, as you like to say, "ignorance is bliss"
so i suppose i'll pretend that you don't own me
as you pretend that glass could never cut you

my beauty is my trojan horse
but what's the crime in that, i ask?
what's a bottle blonde bauble with nothing else to give
supposed to give?
and i suspect this was a tacit agreement anyways

We are delicate, Us ornaments

Our fate determined from birth
We're built from glass and made to break
whether We're loved too rough, or not enough
the outcome remains the same
so until then, as ornaments We hang

garden of virtue

By Audrey Crocco

i can feel the earthly inner child
the noise of my ecosystems fauna -
speaking in tongues
feeling the earth's virtue through dirt's grain
the rhythm of existence
the garden beneath me
the beauty of aptitude

Musician

By Basil Nussbaum

Here are the hands of a musician
They rest before you,
Jumping about in a painful haze
Their blood running in waves of passionate fear

Hands controlled by madness
Grandiose movements, guided by something unseen
An entity of tricks, ferocious energy,
Holding the hands in their own and pushing them along

Only the divine worship their tainted melodies
Children of Earth have no such love for blessed noise
The music of humanity is the water of the heavens
A trilling of inhumane tongues feed,
Those of golden scriptures

Sounds of melodic sufferings,
Echo off the walls,
And come back in a rushing pulse of emotion
A bestial cry that fills the hall
Of passion and pain, enveloping the mind
Of a sound that rips the soul apart,
Then sends the damaged pieces off
To wither away in desolation

And unto these hands, I call,
How do you tame these wild cries?
How do you make people dance to this laughter,
these screams?

God's chosen instrument breaks keys
Strikes strings and boards with tempered aggression
These hands draw in listeners from near and far
To call out the raw sorrows of the broken
To paint smiles across the poor

Many a revel have been held in the midst,
Of this tortured art
Dances of a lone heart and the dances of many
A dance to cry, to fall, to feel
A dance of death and broken limbs

These hands need not falter
Never a desire to cease
For they have only known patience
An unwavering drive of passion

Why do they allow themselves to continue?
Is it due to the possession of a devil?
A cruel entrapment of hellish movement
The end coming only when the hands can be raised,
No longer by the bleeding instrumentalist

The hands that hold a cursed gift
The hands of creation
They are the hands that pray to survive,
That pray to feel
These are the hands of a musician

A Grove

By David Fadem

There's gonna be a grove
Over the place where I sleep.
It won't belong to me
Or my neighbors.
No, it will be its own.
And so will the trees that hug each other's roots as if to say:

"You don't have to worry,
I'm not going anywhere."

Just around the corner,
Where the crematorium used to be,
There's gonna be a brook
That bends around the woods, lending itself away.
Come will the woodland creatures;
They'll stand on the stones that have returned
To an uncut state--
No longer a marker
Or even a memory.
Just granite being eternally washed
Under sun-speckled water.

I don't want a casket.
I just want to be buried with my arm raised so that,
If they wish,
The trees can shake my hand and tell me:

"You don't have to worry.
I'm not going anywhere."

Sublime at Rock Bottom

By Dillon Corwin

The moment I knew I was free is when I passed out in the street

Half past 11, quarter mile left to go, embracing cold rain

Half dreaming of a lonesome room

an empty house

a warm sheet, a cold tile floor

Where a slumber's built in memory of dead delusions

And I finally find the joy of living as a speck of dust,

A blade of grass,

A drop of rain,

a single brick.

I can bask in the glory of my worthlessness now:

shameless dizzy bliss.

I watch four headlights move past me

carrying someone I'll never meet

Who with which I could conquer the world

If manic hope was for me

cause when you told me I meant nothing to you

I felt like I could breathe

I laid on concrete pillows and floated down the sidewalk

Where once was dreadful pleading is now giddy love of hate

I laugh at grief

craving apathy

and a perfect life with no place

Where I can live unnoticed

And I can die without noticing

where if I don't have a shovel in my hand, I'm playing roulette

in my free time

My past delusions threaten me
Delusions of a purpose
breaking my triumphant silence
Not telling me I'm meaningless
Tainting my rosy dysfunction
cracking the glass on my eyes
But this is the new and brilliant me
I think that I'm enlightened

Skin

By Mal Vaughn

it was dark
it was loud and it was dark
the room was dimly lit and below me was my body
more sad than scary
it was still moving, muscles contracting every couple of
seconds
the ugly yellow light illuminating the pale flesh that remained
on my face
it gave a disgusting glow to my carcass
i wouldn't even call it mine anymore
it belongs to whatever spirit inhabits it and continues my life
where I left off
but for now, it's still mine to look at and judge and belittle
now dead, I don't look like anything
i don't have a blue tint to my skin or a ghoulish expression
i'm nothing without a body
and it's a body without a nothing

pre made happy place

By Madison Bold

The candles reek of mint and drip pale pink wax on the dark wood floors. The grain feels like a fingerprint from one you loved before; It's cold as ice, but there's blankets to keep warm. Blankets of the softest fuzz. One wall is just a window clear enough to fall through an opening to the outdoors; the others are dimly lit and plain with accidental splats of paint. Paint tubes that fill this empty space. In the middle of all the colors of all the shades is an empty canvas facing that great window. The outside is sunrise at a time that still feels like night, stars just starting to fade. They hang above dense cherry blossom trees. The clouds are washed out pastels as if they were painted with mother nature's water colors; yellows pinks oranges and blue. An ability to hear all these colors shift from crickets to distant birds. The sun pauses at just the right moment to be perfectly balanced between everything with its shining white ring that beams through all the branches. Creating a ripple of light in the glass sitting in front of this blank canvas. The gesso base leaves a nice burn in each breath that smells like childhood art classes, and meditative inhales taste like serenity and mint.

Then every blink that ends
I've never been there before.

Midnight Offerings While You Stand at the Door

By Amani Jones

There is no rice left in our cupboards
none for you and none for I
Are you fine with coffee?
brewed moments ago it's fresh
I promise
if your belly is concave
Shovel saltines through your gullet

Until you cannot speak
Until there is no spit left in your body
Until the Sahara unfurls in your working hands

There is some cheese I've left UNCOVERED
Pick the dry spots off the edge
Taste the tang of extra sharp cheddar
Overaging in the fridge
That is all I have to offer you

I am you are we are
Poor, tired,
dry,
and there is
no rice left in the cupboards
for you, for us, for I.

Tiny Roaches

By Aidan Brockelman

Tiny roaches, scamper about,
Who let them in? They can't get out!
The bugs are stuck, without a doubt-
We have an infestation.

The bugs are real, they have to be,
I look at them, they look at me,
It would appear i really need-
A psych evaluation.

I am the slime! The spice of life!
The bugs bring pain, and toil, and strife,
I hate the bugs, they killed my wife-
I need a long vacation.

Mother of the Valley

By Alyson Van Dusen

Grass spikes
bend at their joints
under the pressure
of our steps
as you
and I walk
down the long
stretch of lawn
until we meet
the lily of the valleys
guarded by irises
and shadowed by
the burning bush

You kneel down
and I follow.
I was so much smaller
than you then.
Your hands
grazed the little
white bells as you said
“These are my favorite”
I stared at the climbing blooms-
dainty loves close to
the soil; lost when you’re not
searching for them.

I don’t remember leaving
that spot against

our house. I come back
sometimes and see them
to remember you. When
you used to smile bright.
Full of life.
Then time got under your skin
and the memories we could make
drew thin.
And as I grow older
I miss being younger
all the more. I miss the
times when you would
cradle me
sign I love you's
at the door.
I miss before the world
broke you down.
Then made it harder
for both of us
to be around.
I envy that we didn't
have more time
before our present became our
past. And now
all I wish is
for you to take me to see
the lilies
and remember
how young we used to be.

But Life Went On

By Bryanna Tavaréz

There, lie a body
Lifeless and Deceased
There, lie a body
In the belly of the beast
Things seemed gloomy
Things felt wrong
But nonetheless
Life went on

Then came a shower
The raindrops poured
These raindrops poured,
But nothing more
The bright green grass
Now knee high
Played along
So then again,
Life went on

The faces of earth
Blossomed full of fresh new life
The faces of the Earth
Glowed vibrant colors at night
Still no cheers?
Still no laughter?
Here came, an entirely new chapter
The air was clear
Peace was finally worldwide
Due to the fact

That the people have died

Birds were chirping

Flowers were blooming

Though we are all gone

Still,

Life went on

so much depends on a red wheelbarrow to carry a body

By Theo Veluz

The ladder swayed in the wind. It was 25 feet tall, enough to reach the highest apples in the tree. Watching Harvey stand on the highest bar, reaching for the fruit, it seemed so much taller. He harvested the apples, dropping them on the ground below with a distinct thump. Thomas was supposed to pick them up, or better yet- catch them, and put them in the wheelbarrow next to him. All he could do was watch them fall. A pile of fruit was starting to form on the grassy floor. The apples glistened, their bright crimson skin reflecting the mid-morning sun. Thomas was transfixed by the scene. The rhythmic gathering of the apples held him in place, staring at his friend above him. Harvey was nonchalant, half-heartedly doing his job, unaware of the danger lurking below him. He trusted Thomas. He was the kind of person that most people felt safe around. His eyes were dark chocolate, the same as his hair. He was tan from all his work in the sun. When he laughed- which was rare, he glanced around to see if everyone else was also enjoying themselves. Thomas had never killed a person before. He was about to. He walked around to the trunk side of the ladder, and strained against it, toppling it over. Harvey shouted at him:

“Hey! Tom, what are you doing?” before he took the twenty-five-foot plummet through a neighboring tree. He yelled. He swore. He scraped his arms and legs on the branches and boughs. Thomas heard something crack on the way down. He wasn’t sure if it was the tree or Harvey. When he hit the ground he stopped screaming. The only noise was Thomas’ heartbeat and the buzzing gnats. In silence, he pushed the wheelbarrow through the grass and then slowly

dragged Harvey into the wheelbarrow. He barely fit, his limbs stuck out at odd angles, and the planks nearly splintered near his shoulders. His eyes were still open, staring forever at the cloudless sky. Uncaring, Thomas rolled Harvey into the orchard, his blood dripping over the slats of the old wheelbarrow.

eyeballs

By Amelia Tuerk

If your eyes fell out on a tuesday morning and rolled down the hallway and hit my feet, I would pick them up and wash them in the bathroom sink.

Gentle with water and no soap, and i would hand them to you, still wet in myyourour hands.

Or maybe I would take mine out too.

Maybe i would keep our eyes in my locker.

Maybe we walk blind for a day and grasp at walls at trees at people until we give up and fall to the earth.

Maybe we lie, blind, in the dark soil, and the bugs crawl on our bodies- reclaim us - reclaim our bodies- reclaim our skin our organs everything but our eyeballs

Because they are still in my locker. Gathering dust.

On blind tuesdays our bodies are only temporary.

Our spirits emerge from our finger nails and hair follicles and the pores on our noses and chins,

As we watch bones sink away from us, into the mud, we fill out the fog with the sounds of our yelling.

We yell when no one can hear us.

We yell so we know we are more than how we are perceived.

No ears, no eyes.

Flower

By Brandon Bracero

To understand the flower
To create is to understand
The process and meaning of your creation
To form a variant of life into this universe
And have it be an extension of your own
I have stared at this flower
For hours and hours
In an attempt to further my knowledge
On my understanding of the flower
There were thoughts in my heart that I already knew
That i never vocalised
I understood what made that flower beautiful
For it is forged in a life of chaos
Each petal deserving its hour of examination
For each waged war for sunlight
For water
For a right to attention and love
Years of life dedicated to the violence beauty holds
Contained in a single entity
Of loud hysteria
One of natures most memorable entities
Holding eternal purpose in our society
That is the process of the flower
But that is not what i examined for those hours
I observed a more controlled entity
A replica
Created and not grown
An imitation of the chaos created by a man or a machine
Something that no matter how hard i try

I could never quite process
Perfection
Man made
Effortless and cosmic
Yet made of the most known material
I stared and drew for hours
Imitating an imitator
I only understood chaos
I can never comprehend the one behind this flower
Its story is beyond me
And thats ok
My flower is not meant to understand the cold
The heat
The swamp
It wasn't grown like that
My violence
My flavour
Is able to live just fine
And be ok with the results
I create
What i understand

posthumousloveofadeadflower
By Jamison Butz

,dying
's miraculous
why? be

cause dying is

perfectly natural; perfectly

-e.e. cummings

a flower decays in a field all by itself for no one was drawn to
pick it

neck arched towards the ground
head bowing to the dirt in respect
for what may lay below

waiting...
curiously, so curious

i was long gone
by now my petals ground
into the dirt, pressed within the mud
gone to rest, decomposing fast
as you planted the seeds you
so firmly grasped in your palm
as if you would face absolute misfortune
to have dropped just one
and you grew

and grew

and grew

and grew

until what you had created had been
called back down into the soil
for it had not learned from before
fallen helpless, thirsty
could not push away
the thoughts of what lay beneath
your fragile stem, breaking

i felt the weight of your dead
dead petals as they fell
upon my rich soil

.posthumouslove

Moon Pie

By Angelina Whitaker

Ready for slumber, I stared at the ceiling with eyelids hanging
low

Whatever was left of the moonlight shone above the closet
doors

Movement hid within the shadows present throughout the light
Passing clouds or branches dancing, rejoicing in the night

Traveling past the temporary blinds on my window
The light overcame the darkness for just a moment
Closing in on it was the surrounding, inevitable doom
The moon slowly waded through the sea of nothingness

My eyes watched the show carefully, awaiting a winner
The darkness overcame the light for just a moment
If only the stars were brighter, if only the moon was a fighter
No matter, I'll always have my slice of moon pie

I wrote this poem and I still don't know how to pronounce calliope.

By Mars Leonard

There's a calliope in my attic.
I don't know who's it was originally;
I've never owned a calliope before.
I thought perhaps it might have been a relative's,
Or maybe it was simply a toy never played with.
I've been in this attic for so long, though.
You'd think I'd have noticed it being put away;
left to sadly rot.
In any case, I managed to miss who put it up here in
the first place.

The instrument itself lays dormant
In the center of my attic.
The lightbulb that will never go out
Illuminates the golden steam-whistle pipes
And casts stark shadows below the
Yellow decorative pieces.
Red as a firetruck,
And just as devastating looking,
The small instrument isn't anything special.
It's old, and odd, and reminds me of
Places I've never been before.
I can hear the collective gasps,
The phantom whip of fire,
And the whispered shrill sound of the calliope itself
When the silence gets too close.

A lot of people don't know what a calliope is.
I didn't know, either, until it started becoming me.

Out of tune and out of date,
The calliope was mainly used in circuses.
It was used to lure in onlookers
Because where is that abysmal noise *coming* from?
It worked well enough,
Until time claimed the simple circus and calliope
In favor of moving onto less ugly things.

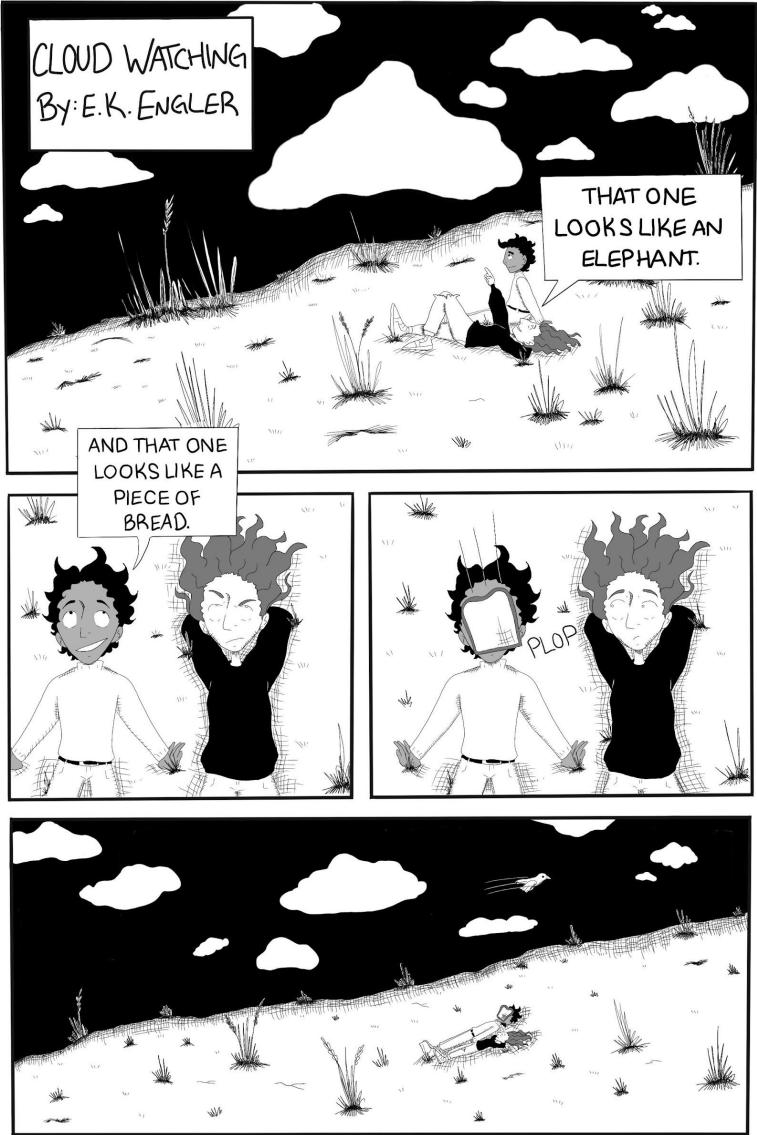
Poor calliope.
Poor me; god, poor me.
I am dying in this musty excuse of a storage room.
My past existence is carried within fleeting memories,
But those people, although not stuck in an attic with a
calliope,
Will die too.
I have forever been nothing much,
Nothing too impressive.
Perhaps at points I was a bit of something; maybe I
Saved a lover from toxic pills and people.
Maybe I showed strangers how to live and how to not
willingly want to die.
Maybe I played the calliope.

Me and the calliope are the same.
I am an unfortunate sight with my tired eyes
And tired heart,
And although I do not gleam muted crimson
Under limited warm lighting,
I still stick out within every blue crowd.
They have marveled and stared, as if I am the
freakshow;
As if I am the thing causing the calliope's sharp tune.

Despite having loved countless people
and having adored the world,
I am nothing more than a passing “what is that thing?”
A brief “I’ve never heard of that,” and a fading
“How do I even pronounce calliope?”
I am... nothing.
Nothing at all.
I think I will sit closer to the calliope now.
Perhaps it will provide me the comfort that being a
memory in
 An attic ever could.

Cloud Watching

By E.K. Engler



An Untitled Poem About a Body Rotting in the Woods

By Vinny Cyr

I dont know if you love me

I don't know if I care—

'Cause I've got iridescent beetles dancing in my hair;

I have fungi in my ribcage

I have flowers in my heart

The earth will remember me, for my bones become my art.

So take me to your garden

rest me in the dirt—

set the worms upon my flesh and let them eat away my
hurt;

And though the evening brightens

and the sky is turning blue

I close my eyes against the light

and emerge as something new.

My body is rotten; my soul is pure

The leaves turn gold around my corpse.

Reverie

By Myah Planten

You could tell a lot about a person from their hands.

My mother's were thin palmed and long fingered, with delicate joints and brittle nails. Calloused fingers from years of holding a pen and typing away on a writing machine. But her palms were smooth and lacked the harsh bumps and man made crevices of labor. Her fingers always shook, her wrist bone sharp and protruding. The most notable thing about them, however, was the color. Pale, with prominent purple veins that carved tracks and curling pathways across the skin and to the bitter tips of her ripped cuticles.

They told a story of old beauty.

Towards the end of her life, she no longer could go outside and was confined to the heavy quilted bed and the windowsill above it. My Nana had said that the window was locked, and was to remain locked. When I inquired why, she said that though the summer breeze was warm to me, it was deadly to my mother.

And so the white, four paned window stayed firmly shut, no matter how many times Mother's glazed eyes would turn to me and ask, *won't you open it for me?*

She always asked to go out and touch the stars.

Sometimes, she'd have clearer, sentient days when the clouds across her eyes had faded into a mist, and the shaking of her hands had limited to a tiny quiver. The woman never did anything else but stare outside. Sometimes, if she had the strength, she'd put one of her hands over the closest pane. Longingly. I always thought it was cruel; that a fleeting touch of cool, dirtied glass was the closest thing to fresh air she could get.

It was on those days that she didn't even ask. She would only knowingly state, *you won't open this for me.*

An orange ladybug had found its way onto the sill, one morning. Mother's hand rested limply in front of it, with twitching fingers, as if beckoning, for hours. The insect never moved, and it wasn't until later when her shaky, deep breathing rose from the bed and I was dusting around the room, when the epiphany hit me.

The lady bug was dead. I felt bad, so I buried it in the garden.

As I performed a mock burial for the insect, which took no longer than five minutes; armed with dirty hands and an old napkin, I found myself equating my mother to the ladybug.

The ladybug was undeniably dead. It passed away with the fresh memory of warm grass and cool air prominent on its mind.

The longer I observed her, the more the sad truth occurred to me.

My mother wasn't like the ladybug. The ladybug was free, and my mother, a caged bird only allowed the teasing glimpse of what she used to have, was not.

The ladybug's death was the end of its story. It would no longer be able to fly throughout the forest, to wander across fallen logs and infectious moss, to feel the wind pushing against its delicate wings. It was gone, and though there's millions of others like it, for this ladybug, its book of life had come to a close.

In contrast, my mother had been dead to the world a long time ago. I used to fancy her a doll. Her eyes reflected light, her skin was porcelain, her hair long, her hands delicate. But dolls didn't breathe, doll's hearts didn't beat.

Though my mother wasn't a walking corpse, I never thought of her as living, per se. She never did things that I classified as requirements for being *alive*. She breathed, and that was about it.

The only thing that did, however, was when I would come in during one of her worse spells. Her expression didn't change from its blankness, but she cried.

She cried like a human, she cried like she was alive.

Her tears reflected the light that streamed from the window, they dropped one by one onto the quilt, as she stared and stared. Her eyes would hold the barest hint of intensity—like, if she stared hard enough the glass would shatter, and she could run out of the window with the ecstaticness of a caged bird in the moment of the freedom she finally earned.

I sometimes wished she would flee, fly away, like the birds she watched from her confinement.

And then Nana would come in. She'd close the curtains. And my mother would die all over again.

That was the unfortunate reality. Unlike the ladybug, her passing would be nothing but final, long awaited liberation.

But, I guess, she'd finally be able to touch the stars.

Devour: A Lovers' Mantra

By Devynn Swasey

We were never meant to survive one another

We have bathed in the cliches of youth

I've plucked the
delicate feathers off
your back

With the exposed
flesh beneath tender
and malleable

I shape you to my
filthy desires

You, an imposter of a friend
You, the source of my agony
You, my bittersweet calamity

I savor the rise and fall of your chest

A mere thicket of ribs denies
me access to your divinity

Then, at last my teeth sink
into your pulsing heart like a
ripe fruit

It bursts in gouts of nectar
running down my chin

My last meal

You consume grains of my flesh and it tears

What was once holy and made of silk

We break each
other down into
specks of matter

Until there is
nothing left but a
pool of scarlet

And an impulsive
prayer redeemed

We were never meant to survive one another

Goodbye Pedestrian

By Dejai Torres

I am a writer walking with tens of other strangers on the New York City crosswalk.

Another.

I wonder as I pass these strangers
How many of them I will never get to know,
Never get to talk to.

I wonder which one of them will die first
(And if that one will be me)

I wonder if there are any other writers
That i'm walking among
That could maybe teach me where a metaphor goes in a poem

We don't talk
At the crosswalk
Or even look at each other
We just wait
For the light to signal that we are safe to cross to the Other Side

And when the yellow taxi passes by,
He will think of us as just pedestrians
And he will never think of us as any more.

And we will never think of *ourselves* as anymore
Because on the crosswalk,
We are not writers, we are pedestrians

We don't talk to one another
Don't look at one another.
We are only waiting to leave.

Goodbye.

Revolt of the Butterfly Child

By Bianca Felix

Inspired by Jessica Care-Moore's works "We Want Our Bodies Back" and "Because if i don't write"

i was raised with an uncontrollable spirit that
can't be dampened

yet

born with frail limbs and
a body that can't support such sentiments.

A butterfly flailing in the wind,

My demise comes in the storm of selfless conviction-

Who told me to give so boldly

as if my own helpless frame could ever support it

?

Not the beautiful butterfly child you painted me out to be,

but rather a strange mockery behind those thick oil
strokes.

Feeling more like a mediocre imitation

crafted from twine and tissue,

forced to travel distances I could never meet.

That your disinterest in their imposed altruism does not
make you any less benevolent!

(May they paint me out to be a monster!

Those frames of fine art don't know a single thing about my
skin)

-Why must the butterfly die
carrying the weight of the clouds
to shield them from the rain,
when their tears have caused the downpour
?

Don't bother nailing me to your walls,
or painting pictures of the millions of us you see.
Don't cheer me on today
as I drift across the winds and push hurricanes out of your
path,
If tomorrow you will set me aflame for telling you that-
I won't do shit for free.

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