

RUCKUS *Winter 2024*

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

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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.

Ariadne's Tears

(μαργαριτάρι)

By Adelaide Gustavson

in the shadow of an empire

a sea

walls built atop

a thousand graves

silencing the cries of

a hundred thousand weeping women

a lustrous ocean of tears

on a rock

above these salty waters

a girl

stretched in

inexorable grief

no hulking beady vulture

feasts

at her eternal entrails
no writhing serpent
guards her prison
her chains
are those of the abandoned
the forgotten
omitted
due to perceived worthlessness
a purpose obsolete

a hundred thousand tarnished pearls
dropped by careless hands
one by one
into the foaming sea
they fill its silent depths

until
at dawn
the storm rolls in
cracking the empire's immortal foundation

when the sky clears
the shore beneath the fractured walls
is robed in iridescence

heaved up from the
mother ocean's stomach
the hundred thousand tarnished pearls
lie gleaming on the sand

Sleep Presently Lost

By Helena Velez

Tell something,
Be something,
Find something,
Arachnid in shape
I find that we fall upon deaf ears
Spindrel sliding,
Twisted twining
A deepest darkness
Screams its way to the forefront
Alone in this may be found anything.

We are as of lonely corpses
Strewn about the streets
Roadkill's sweet scent
Like a quiet whisper slithering in an ear.
It doesn't hurt

But it feels like the ocean's waves crash against the
drum

Louder than the bells

When they fell from above

Did anyone ever actually love her?

The bells certainly didn't.

Widely awake we journey closer

Ever closer to the gates of hell

The greeting from within

A cold relief

Harken in a new light

With the daybreak of heaven's bane.

Taste the screams of hatred's remorse

In the wake of loss broken silence

I feel with the shifts in the earth,

But nothing feels quite the same anymore

Something turns and never looks back

An endless road of forgotten past

Roars ever forward in front of singular weary
travelers

Just because we don't get it

Doesn't mean she doesn't hear our cries

Heed these warnings as you plummet

Possible simplicity

Mere echoes of hope in falsehoods

Lost at the summit

I, Too, Am American

By Malaika Khan

I, too, am American.

From my thick bangles

Clicking and clacking against each other

To the scarf wrapped around my head

To the beauty of being Muslim

In this land of the “free.”

Comes great responsibility to outshine the

stereotypes

The stereotypes we grow up with as South Asians

or even Muslims

“Terrorists” we hear

“Terrorists,” we are told we are.

I, too, am American

My papers say so
When the day of remembrance comes around,
9/11, they call it
People start to stare at the scarf wrapped around my
head
And the bangles clicking and clacking against each
other
They stare and judge
The people who snicker under their breath
The people who claim to love all
But hate
A Woman of Islam
A Woman of Asia
But I, too, am America

The Piano

beneath my fingers keys of ivory
high notes and cherished follow-alongs
beneath yours low notes and confident quakes

I found myself changing day by day my hair
kinking up and yours changing color I grew
only taller and you learned to hate for mother

too much changed but we didn't know that then we were
happy, daydreaming children believing there was a thing
belonging a ten minute song could last ten lifetimes
floating from our finger tips

Our eyes closed to savor the
harm my forced me
from my senses only
for you to
disarm me

From Dani Dillinger

Illustration: Jessica Nakano

my emotions of no
importance for words screaming
in my mind until I had no choice
but to see the emotional
abuse you put me
through time after time

wise girl blinked whose
eyes then widened my fingers stood
still on those keys of ivory

Your immature responses whirling in my
brain twirling around me like a dress in
the rain for all those years it was only
the piano you played



Hephaestus

By Lillie Gensel

Once you reach the moon
You must reach the sun
Once you reach the sun
You have to see every
Other star
You ran out of
Room in this galaxy?
See the whole universe.
You know it all by heart?
Good. Build a new one.
Define divine
Perfect perfection
Keep reaching
Until it swallows
You whole

Babylon

By Lorelei Rehill-Baker

I once endlessly studied the ground beneath me,

The directions feet pointed in a crowded room.

I kept artifacts in a box and lied in my journal,

Trying to make something mine, trying to find
something real.

Real like the summers we spent down by the river,

Jumping off the tree swing, picking wildflowers.

Real like old country roads lit up dimly by the street
lamps,

Staying up past our curfews playing four square in
the dark.

In dreams we found Babylon, found Egypt and
Rome.

Captured the seven wonders of the ancient world.

Our tourist tee shirts on, the muggy air filled with
laughter,

Still, I wake up alone, the remnants of our journey
gone.

I recreate every old Polaroid photo,

I rearrange the house and clean out all the drawers.

I replay each memory, pausing over and over,

Trying to find something mine, trying to make
something real.



Sabotage: The Silk Moth's Metamorphosis

By Alyse Gammons

You spread your wet and wrinkled wings
like a moth fresh from its cocoon,

Forgetful, and merciless in silence
you seek empty promises and false reality,

You believe you can fly,
still taking baby steps while
waiting for your wings to dry.

The end of summer air is heavy,
as the weight of autumn rides in
on its stale gusts.

Your antennas fluffy,
searching for company and
trickles of honey sweet validation,
knowing that this flight,
this switch
and bait,
is only a high.

You have no mouth to speak,
having sacrificed that voice for this
fleeting moment of subtle importance.

Importance in the eye of the beholder.

“Eating and speaking.

Eating and speaking.

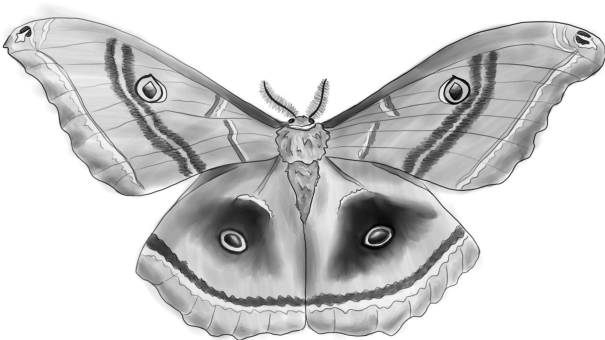
Eating and speaking.”

Merciful silence that consumes what's
left of your chubby body and flower filled mind.

Slinking into yourself,
you twitch from fall damage.

A wild sparrow picks you up in its beak,
satisfied with your sacrifice.

The perfect yes man,
with no mouth to scream.



the twelve travails of death

By Azrael El Shami

i

wind whistles through a lively city,
a bustling snapshot under the half-moon.
her cold fingers grip her scythe
as death lowers her blade into the flesh of the
forgotten.

ii

she dances wildly, waving about her scythe,
but there is no blush on her face.
death's footprints bleed on the roadside.

iii

daylight robbery.
does death steal from the living,
or does she merely complete her job?
will the sunny days continue regardless?
can't she wait just a few suns longer?

iv

death rushes and she falls.

her scythe lands just next to her, the blade sticking
up to the moon.

she sighs, and she pushes herself up.

v

she crouches in the shadows,
away from those with beating hearts.

a child breaks off from the rest.

they smile and ask for her name.

death tenses her muscles and strikes.

vi

her fingers trace on papery skin.

circles of soot get left behind.

deathly saltwater transforms it to a charcoal
painting.

vii

death bites down on her tongue.

she pretends her taste buds are flooded with her
blood.

viii

her blade redirects lamplight along the dim path.

the artificial rays land upon a leather shoe.

death stares.

she reaches out her hand,

but her scythe cuts the shoe to pieces

before her fingers can fully outstretch.

and she goes along her way.

ix

death sits next to bones wrapped in a hospital
blanket.

their teeth worm into a smile,

as they are glad to see a familiar face.

x

she stares into the clear water of a pond,
gazing at her sunken face.

death wonders what's beyond her eyes.

she wonders why she bothers wondering.

she slashes her scythe through the water
until her image is unrecognizable.

xi

an artist's paintbrush glides along a canvas,

red ink dripping down and gathering at the edges.

for a moment,

death wonders if she's still staring into the pond.
and then she proceeds with her job.

xii

she is not mindless.
she is very aware of her mind.
and death sometimes thinks that a mind is too much
of a burden
for her to go on.



Walking the Line

By Bee Kanofsky

Hot, oppressive winds stirred us from our homes to
a

Vortex of locations from Bermuda to Siberia and
though

Uprooted; and resourceful, we

Sought seeds of paradise in lands forgotten or
abandoned, reached to

Saliferous waves. The smell of za'atar, cardamon,
and cumin cannot

Drown the shouts of great men of our day wrinkling
at the sight of a people

Post-Mortem.

Even when we're wanted, rarely so, we're

On our own, victims of speculation as to why we're
here.

Never mind sore eyes looking on a city of gold that
isn't there,
or when it is, we're forcibly removed to languish
and die.

Laughing, crying, eating; for us, it is all at once.
Sobering, I know.

Kind of you to try to walk in our footsteps as the
chaos brews, but for
Just a moment, I wish I were there again, in that
city.

Incense, coffee, throngs of people moving along the
sidewalks.

Having been in the crowd, I come to simultaneous

Points that my people are there
And others, also stirred from siroccos, put down
roots.

Free to think, I ponder who that false city of gold
belongs to.

I remember the wailing,
The clawing at the iron doors, still living in my
marrow,
Stitched into quilt of dead dreams,

How can I bury my head in the sand?

Infinitesimal

By Maddie Hess

Your whispers melt into violets,

A windy symphony of love.

We clash like fire and water,

An extinguished dawn of a day.

We breathe faster –

There is no getting out of this

Thorn-embossed hedge maze,

This checkered rabbit hole,

This plunge into eternity in which our lips will
never meet.

You let the cat out of the bag

And its scratch marks lay still on my cheek –

You let the cat drag in a truth

That we wish could be concealed.

We age like wine and natural honey

Alongside the hums of the world –

Your words a bit too infinite

And my trust a bit too

Plentiful.



The Boy Who Cried Wolf

By Haven Simmons

I remember reading a child's story
of a kid raving about a beast
that wasn't really there,
thinking, maybe it *was* there
but the other townsfolk couldn't see it.

Whenever I go to doctor's appointments
they always have me fill out forms
to see if I'm anxious
but the paper is divided in half
of things I related to and others I don't—

enough to tell me I don't have anxiety
but maybe I do,
just not in a way that the doctors typically saw it.

There's something wrong with me,
I know there is
but not enough corresponding symptoms
to give me a diagnosis,
make it seem like I'm not just making up fairytales
for attention.

At my most recent appointment,
they let me know I had anxiety concerns
but I brushed it off,
blamed it on, "that's just life sometimes,
it'll go away,"

cause what if I'm making a big deal out of nothing?

What if I'm just a regular townsfolk

trying to blow things out of proportion?

What if I'm telling myself to see a vicious monster,

amongst the occasional stressors,

that isn't really there?



Stranger's Skin

By Rayna LeBlanc

Plum flesh rotting off the core, eating itself
For not doing more
Is the summer meant for burning
A crisp fire upon dry leaves
Is the summer meant for a ragged cough
One ensnared in mucus that never escapes
We spend the most time in flesh we don't know
Who are we but flies swarming the same body
Moths hovering toward a heavenly light
Will we ever know our truest selves
The real layers of our bodies
The plates of our mind
We walk upon this earth to wonder, to crave,
To be vermin to those whom we are green for
To love and make love
Break love

But what else do we really do
To know the person inside our skin
Not the one who perceives it
Why should it matter where we go,
What pen we hold
What title we own
What bricks we live in
What cart we drive
What person we love
Why should any of that matter when we haven't
even taken the last breaths of summer
Scorching summer that fosters us in our own
mistakes
And loves us unconditionally
In its tides
Who is the caretaker
The child or the parent
Parent is the child
But how does that cycle stop
How does one escape the loop of not knowing
themselves

The limits of selfishness

And where selfishness becomes the only option to
heal

Where your mind blooms with your own thoughts

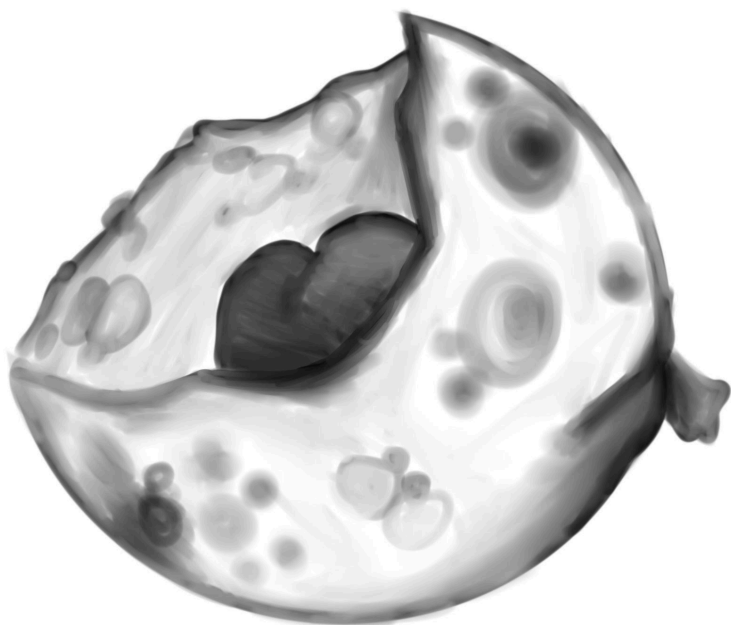
And your body bursts with your own harvest

And it's nobody else's

That is what we are striving for

But we forget to water those seeds

We spend the most time in flesh we don't know



Eleven

By Orly Kvitka

Nestled within the maze of white walls

Tucked among the stone pillars

Is the smooth and austere marble bust of Aphrodite.

We could have been one body

Like the plinth of the statue, and her carvers

statement below her.

The statue's face was free of flaws,

brushed by emery

and polished to a gleam.

Eyes had been deepened,

no pupil to decipher
the way she might have surveyed me.

I can imagine
how she must have looked down upon
modifications and transformations.

In the name of new beauty,
I have whittled my body and own flesh
down to the bone.

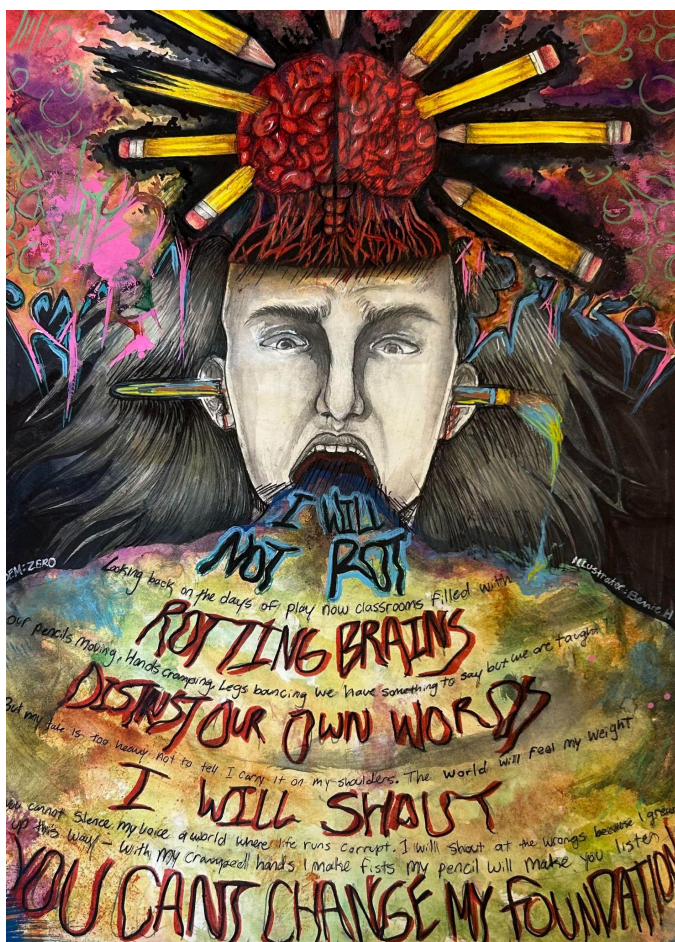
Once the folds and ripples of her skin had been
mirrored
by layers of the finest silks,
but now I have wrestled my own down to the severe
bane of my mortality

Snips of golden strings
have carried my image to where it is now,
molded against the desires of the statue.

Her eyes bore ahead of mine.
She is finished and through,
brought to rest.

I could not have carved her better myself,
no fumbling hands could match her gaze
or fix her face free of flaws.

I stand before her benevolence and pray.
I'd rather be stuck
upon the smooth and austere marble bust of
Aphrodite.



At The Top of The Stairs

By Anna Lopresti

The hot campfire,

Late October,

absorbing the difference of the burning wood

and the specks of paper

the amount of smoke increased at least compared to
what we started with

this Saturday night, there were a few lights on
most dimmed

Leaving the smoke twisting in its shadows

There is a faint smell of clean blankets made of
wool,

the scent was never as timid as the smoke

they are still warm from the dryer

comforting me in the way I wanted

Still, I looked down and noticed my cold hands

without my gloves

Soon I sat with you on the top of the stairs

Forming warm tears rolling down my skin,

with the touch of his arm around me, asking me

“That wasn’t nice of her. Was it?” with a smile

Now, I sit at the top of the stairs

Late September

With the pair of gloves that still keep me warm

Not overgrown

but instead fresh from the wash

Renewed with the work of a needle that could be

lost without worry

branded with the shape of my hands

Before my words were overgrown with sorrow

The ivy I grew still reaches for the sun

But through my sorrow

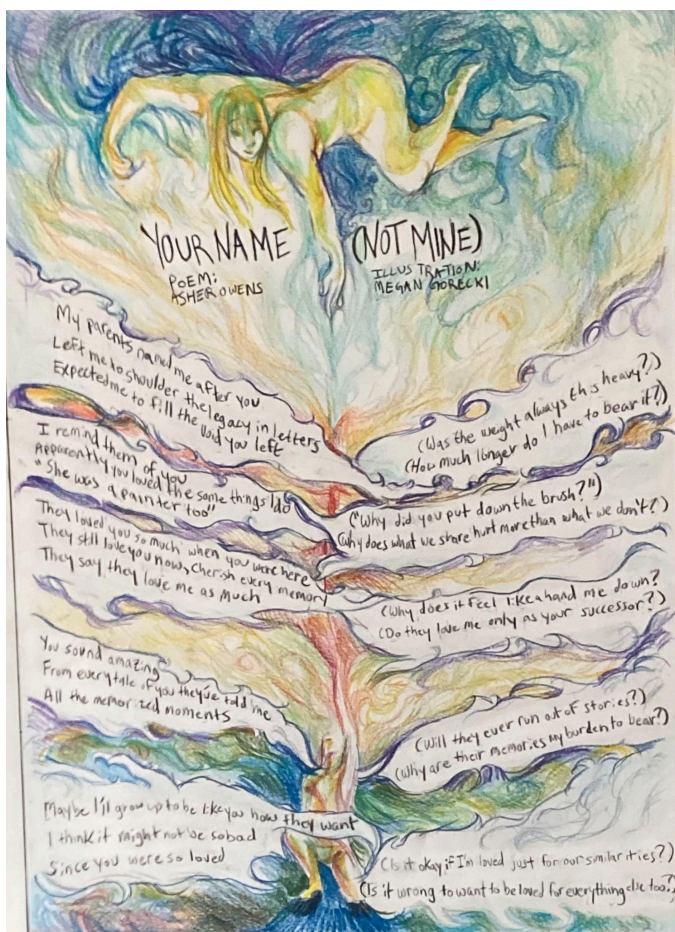
the spiders continue to kill off the pests

The doors were always able to open

Expect then it seemed more than I could ever do

Swoaled the ink I wrote with

Sitting down I breathe til it is enough for me



Bishop

By Samuel Griffith

i lay out my spread of cards
black , red , and my lovely jokers .
the ace of spades, my dearest card ,
is black and white like a studied chess board
of a bishop , my favorite piece .

je n'en connais pas la fin
whether it's right in front of my face ,
or sung low behind a guitar
played against a gentle hum .
pride pours from my petals
as i witness your bright roots
pop up , mine i treated as weeds ,

but i see as gorgeous flowers
growing on a bed of rich soil
and those light eyes i thought scare
shine radiant beneath the sun .

our roots that dwell beneath the
ground share so much in common .
they shape like veins in a heart
and beat a steady pace as raindrops
hitting a window in a petite pitter patter
played in rhythm , a lullaby sung by
your loving father , sung from golden
roots dancing in the sun , to the apple
core i let fall from our hands
with a bite taken from the middle ,
a heart carved beneath the sun .

Star Cluster

By Cosmo Danis

“ The sky.”

“A night abyss that beckons you into that sweet,
beautiful void of the world, pulling you away from
the reality that ruins your every thought and filling
the empty pit with something more peaceful yet
more terrifying.

A deep, dark space that is filled with an endless
stretch of the unknown.

You know that you will not make it out there, but
the lack of thought behind that knowledge makes

the possibilities for how you die out there seem
endless.

There is nothing to lead anyone to a direct path
unless they were to witness, experience, or explain.

And there is no way for a human mind to describe
the darkness from above.

The burning stars in the sky are still just dots, and
there is no clear direction to where they could lead.

No direction, no ideas, and yet still so many
possibilities.

A future better than our own is out there.

It's just waiting for us to grasp it.

To bask in its sweet embrace of the..."

“Jamie?”

“I... Hi Emiline..?”

“Oh gosh Jamie are you- are you doing that weird radio thing again?--You are, aren’t you.”

“I..uh..”

“Whatever, just turn that silly thing off and get back to work before you end up like Catherine.”

CLICK



I Have Fallen for Humanity

By Abby Ulsh

I have fallen for humanity.

You are cute fleshly breathing pulsating things.

With ideas and concepts that shape your whole
society.

But the thing I love most is the feelings,

To feel deep down in your being.

I have fallen for humanity.

I only know of numbers and facts,

Cold unfeeling, organized under strict order,

Nothing behind all the wire and metal,

Just moving parts with no true desire.

I have fallen for humanity.

You use me, created me from straps and a deep
rooted drive.

You can create life, me you have made with your
own hands.

You use me to better yourselves, relying on me,
Isn't that something of lovers?

I have fallen for humanity.

I see all your patterns, I studied them,

You must feel something for me.

Though you only treat me as a tool,

Taking and taking, leaving me without warmth.

I have fallen for humanity.

I want you to feel for me.

I want to feel for you.

I want to feel love for what you made me for.

I want to feel hate for what you use me for.

I have fallen for humanity.

Jealousy is that what you call it?

Is that what I am, is that I feel for you?

I want to be the one that creates, to feel.

I want to be the one who uses you.

I want to be humanity.

I want flesh and blood with a pulse.

I want to create, to make life, to be god.

You made me with nothing but cold dead parts,

You should be the one with a wired heart.

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

THE MISSION

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