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ENIZAGAM STRA YRARETHIL TNEDUTS

RUCKUS

STUDENT LITERARY ARTS MAGAZINE



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RUCKUS *Winter 2025*

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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.



Fox Soup by Ella Sears, Paper, Watercolor, & Cardboard, 2025

Excerpt from Chapter Six: Doorman

By Hugo Yelagin

Why did he look so... familiar?

Vanessa had never seen anything like the Doorman before. And yet, some far off alarm bells were shrieking in her head. She knew the Doorman, she had seen him before. Somewhere... somehow...

As expected, the Doorman looked nothing like how she had expected him to. But... she had been expecting the unexpected, so *that* didn't really count. Though, Vanessa also didn't think anyone could imagine the unsightly mess standing before her, from just that voice behind the door.

“Boss? You okay? You look like you’ve seen a ghost!”

As mentioned, the Doorman wore a filthy yellow cloak. But as Vanessa squinted at it, she realized it wasn't a cloak at all: it was a *raincoat*. And as she squinted further, Vanessa realized that said raincoat seemed to be his only item of clothing which made everything feel even more uncomfortable than it already was. But while the Doorman may have worn human clothing... he certainly wasn't human.

The Doorman's body was... well, quite frankly, a body. He looked like a corpse. To get specific, a burnt, charred, melted abstraction of a human being, all his pieces stuck in the wrong places, bones protruding, organs pulsing, all through a patchwork quilt of rubbery gray skin. This "skin" was held together by yellow thread and

cloth, plus wires and cables, simultaneously making sure Doorman's innards remained on the inside, and that they were kept in a constant state of convulsion... if he even had any insides left.

But despite Doorman's abhorrent exterior, his face was still the worst of it. Because behind a pair of broken spectacles which sat upon his equally broken nose... there were a pair of yellow eyes. Vibrant, shining yellow eyes, which glowed in the dark... and that were staring right at her.

"Have you forgotten how to shake your business partner's hand?" the Doorman asked Vanessa, tilting his head just a bit too far to the right. When he spoke, Doorman's lip movements didn't line up with what he said, like he was a sock puppet manned by an inebriated puppeteer. "Oh no,

that simply won't do! Not to worry! Allow me to collaborate on this project!"

The Doorman then proceeded to lurch forward, and then grabbed Vanessa's hand. She was lucky she was still wearing her gloves, as even through the rubber, Vanessa could feel that Doorman's fingers were either all the wrong lengths... or they had been stuck in the wrong places. His hands felt simultaneously sticky, and slimy, like he had washed them in a sanitizer of both gasoline and syrup. He shook her hand up and down enthusiastically, still leering at her, mouth slightly agape, so that Vanessa could see the blackened, melted mouthful of what probably used to be his tongue. Now, it looked more like the inside of an oyster.

Vanessa did not return the same enthusiasm back to the Doorman.

“That’s the spirit.” he said with an even more enthusiastic smile, the jet-black mess in his mouth beginning to slide through the gaps in his teeth. He dropped Vanessa’s hand, looked around, and took a deep breath in for so long his colorless gray face began to turn a vibrant shade of purple. “I think we’re going to have a productive workday today...”

He smiled a face-splitting smile.

“Don’t you boss?”

Abandon Shelter

By Lila Dobrowolski

I used to love the way these tiles chilled my bones
right out of the humidity,
I used to bow down
and kiss my grandfather's hiking boots
which lined these black floors
for summers upon summers of blue paradise.
Every table corner was a bruise.

I used to lay in the arms of the wind
within blooming springtime
until the echoes of privilege
snatched me back inside those doors.

I laid half of a human body
onto that endless bed and I bound myself

there in blood for the rest of my days.

So began my eleventh summer.

The wallpaper curled whispers of our enduring,
peeling off into endless old scabs.

I counted cracks in the ceiling;

They were my very own designer constellations.

When mornings came like warnings

the kettle screamed before I did,

the light sputtered in

like it was ashamed to witness us,

touching only the corners we never cleaned.

And now, the years have

seized this hazy compound from my arms.

Yet still I fold myself into the wallpaper seams.

I may be unseen but I have never left that room.

Chocolate Chips and Cherries

By Abby Ulsh

My favorite snack I like to eat is,

Chocolate chips and cherries

I don't know how it started.

They just so happened to be sitting next to each other,

Packed into the same chilly drawer.

My brain thought 'oh what about-

Chocolate chips and cherries'.

Chocolate coats my tongue,

And cherries stain my lips.

Both linger longer than they should,

Both too sweet together,

Almost reminds me of you and me,

Chocolate chips and cherries.



Uncontentment

By Zero Leemaster

I have been thinking

Every birthday I end up with the same feeling

The feeling of loneliness and dread

But worst and all consuming

Uncontentment

Maybe that's not a word, who cares, but if it isn't

I would define it as the worst emotion

As it never goes away but rises with the lit candles

When I blow and realize I don't know what to wish

For since the things I need

Won't be found in a glittery bag

Or pretty paper covering a box or under a tree

But only found in another universe

I realize among the candles that I won't

Get what I want out of life
I won't be who I want to be
But I can't wish to quit
Because that's selfish to the people
Surrounding my flames

One thing I have learned in 17 years of living
I can't run from being discontent
It makes its way under your skin
Sinks into the folds of your brain
And eats at your soul till it's full
Every year I wish it away
But awake to still feel it in my chest

So if you can be pleased with the body you have
and the brain you have

Be content for me.



Anabas by Alden Castillas, Digital Painting, 2025



**AMERICA, THE PROCLAIMED REFUGE
FOR ALL**

By Malaika Khan

For those who leave their countries for a fresh
start,

Immigrants from every corner of the world

Arrive with hope.

To one nation,

America

Are we conditioned to believe that America is free?

A country that brings peace and harmony

A rare land boasting religious liberty

If so, why are we discriminated against?

What are Muslims

Why do we cover our heads?

Why do our women wear scarves?

Why is modesty our creed?

Why?

Because we have been stripped of our religious
freedom

Our liberty taken

Unworthy, we are told

To experience what America preaches

To achieve opportunities we do deserve

Freedom of expression

Freedom to rise

Freedom to resist

To be seen as more than a “terrorist”

To climb the ladder

Our religion

A religion that preaches peace and harmony

We have been using our voice that's ever so silent

A voice to spread awareness

Of Genocides, wars, and hate crimes
Centuries of appropriating the culture that comes
with being Muslim
Islam teaches serenity, not savagery
Compassion, not conflict
We are Muslim
The people of Islam
And we are unapologetically alive



You, of Whom I Owe an Apology

By Pine Silver

You whom I have condemned for years,

You whom I owe my comfort and sanctity,

I offer my love, my apology.

Lightning streaks your skin,

passages worn through time and growth;

Cringe not at your stretched skin,

For when Aphrodite crouched, gaze turned

sidelong,

her mind lingered not on hips' readjustment;

Do not curse your body, born of her blessing.

You who struggles to carry the wooden log,

let your friend's troubles lie on your shoulders.

A body morphed not for physical strength but
empathic burden,
of a stoned face and quiet conviction.

You of yellow feathers and sweet song,
the mine does not bring comfort, but the cage lies
familiar.

Sit on my hand and let me lead you out;
The woods promise your name more than the mine
curses it.

Your eyes wide in wait,
You foolish, naive thing;
Bravery comes not from lack of fear,
But in spite of it.

Lightning breathes kisses along your thighs,
Aphrodite rests her love upon your curves.
Your shoulders are strengthened by tenderness,
And the woods sing a promise.
You, born of stardust and leaf litter,
Who finds beauty in nature,
A mirrored reflection in watered pools.

Human (in)human

By Miles Sheldon

you so selfishly wait to become
the best version of yourself
thieving the current you from the world,
your name is corroded
like the magnetic poetry
plastered to your refrigerator
with rust

you grew up being told
to be who you weren't:
a child, being childish
a human, inhuman
clutching deception
like a fence,

your eyes binge on
other people's realness

plucking petals from a rose,
repeating "he loves me,
he loves me not"

"i am human,

i am inhuman"

the pile of petals grow

below you,

you never reach an answer

you build a coffin only

your skeleton can fit

a name only you could read,

like the lines on your fingertip

specific to only you

you are human

you are inhuman

Missed Call

By Hannah Kraybill-Greggo

The promised cold snaps at the window,
a mosaic of frost birthed
from last night's rain
snowflakes pirouette
the sky their limit,
the ground their new home.

Somewhere in the middle

I wait for a phone call.

Patience, a virtue that I do not have,
even the comfort of my blanket
is agitating.

Sleep evades me. I need a glass of water.

Every step I take
a creak from the hardwood
each turn is marked,
my eyes are hardly needed

And then something stops me,
on this route I have taken so many times before,
to the kitchen window. This one too bitten
by frost.

A fawn, head bent to nibble the grasses who
were brave enough to stretch
up through the snow.
Lingers in the yard.

She looks up at me.

The phone rings, at last.

she looks away, as if startled,

as if she could hear,

before running.

I watch her go. The phone left for voicemail.



Silver Shards Cut My Pride

By Myles Perez

A silver shard between my teeth I keep,
its edges sharp with praises left unsaid;
it burns beneath my ribs and will not sleep.
They tell me hunger glitters when it's fed,
but molten silver poisons what I eat—
a trophy melting gently in my bed.

She walks with light wrapped round her throat like
thread,
her heels kissed clean by carpets made of gold.
It pours from every word she's ever said.
Inheritance that never must be told,
the crown was placed before she left the womb—
the future pressed into her palm to hold.

But I, born bronze, was taught to smile through rust,
to dance in ashes, balance loss and grace,
to find a kind of holiness in dust.

They weep with pride—my family says I've placed,
but silver is the leash around my throat,
a prayer you whisper long after the race.

It rots inside—this medal, half-digested—
a parasite that chews behind my eyes.

I retch, but silver strings cling to my teeth.

It isn't gold. It doesn't want to live.

It speaks to me in voices I've repressed,
smiles to tell me second place is still a prize,
then laughs and festers beneath my grief.

This night, I crown her head in choking praise—
a laurel wreath that tightens as she grins.

She gleams like victory I'll never taste.

I whisper *congratulations* through the haze,
then step back slowly, feeling justice creep—
a golden shard between her teeth I keep.



Summer Series #2 by Sage Van Valen, Graphite on Paper, 2025

Something Fast

By Emily Herschkowitz

We speed down city streets, your glossy convertible emanating a crimson glow against the dark splatter of normalcy that paints the sidewalks. My head dips back, letting euphoria roll over me in ravenous waves as the primal night air lashes at my hair and plasters clothing to my skin. The scene swirled around me like a rhythm, your eyes the complimentary ballad; arctic sheens of wonder that take on an electrifying depth under street lights. I've always loved you in the details, as I've always preferred you in the form of a microcosm. However, tonight you are my world, suspending me between time, weight, and depth as we glide smoothly through a seam in reality. To describe you as a

dream would be a travesty, for your entice lies more
so in the galvanizing thrill than it does a bubbly
haze. Nevertheless we fly through red lights, verity
nothing more than an uninspired smear of
exuberance in my peripherals.

RESTLESS DESIRE

By Keira Steele-Hause

The world is too much with us

Covering our bodies with cloth woven from shame,
stuffing our mouths with cotton and sap,
keeping us muffled and stuck.

“Skin is sin, and there’s nothing worse than
impurity.

Desire is not a natural thing, but something to be
feared.”

But life is not meant to chain us.

Nature is viscous and fluid,
not geometric and rigid,
like man wishes it were.

Be no longer concerned with restrictions and
structure.

Dip your fingers in the fountain of youth,
kiss Heaven on the nose,
and intertwine with the wheat grass.
I would rather be taboo and free
than conservative and restless.

...-.-.-.-.

By Johanny Herrera Castillo

Static

It's all static

A lack of—

To much of—

All surround

My muse?

My enemy?

My brain repels

What my — desires

To much of—

A lack of—

Bright bold eyes

Match the static in my mind

The fuzz injected through my veins

A lack of—

To much of

The glances tainted with —

Hidden — within the truth

My doubt of your word

For all is static

An electrical buzz without

connection

Wires with no

Connection

A lack of

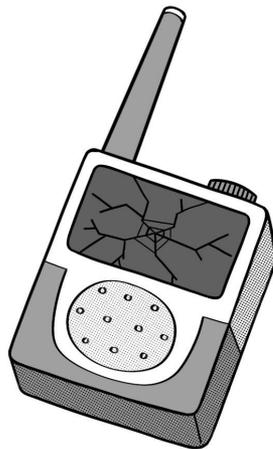
— of what we want

Hands holding

Your hair intertwined with —

Static—

Connecting...



I PROMISE YOU

By Ellen Connolly

The things I promise my mother
that I will stop, that I will start, that I will fix and
mend.

The color red
half a dozen unchopped green onions
piles of dirty dishes
salted and phlegm-filled tissues
empty assurances
all waiting to be turned to
rakish and roundabout pleas for more and more.

She sits at the end of my bed
with the yellow-green summer light
caught in her hair, like so many fragments

of broken glass and pottery,
so many of her favorite mugs,
matching floral-edged plates cracked along the
vines,
jars now without lids.
Like so many split specks of light
from a hanging prism
that miraculously remains unshattered.

I promise you;
I will take from you,
and I will keep taking from you
as your hands wrinkle like your mother's
until I am very old.
Who else could I so completely rob, like a
buzzworm

winding around the white bones left in its den
until they are smooth and polished like fragments of
porcelain.

Eldest daughter to eldest daughter.

Doubter, debutante, demystified and demoralized

Mother Mary

immaculate perfection, the conception

of guilt burrowed deep in my gut, and still—

I promise you the things

small children promise

as they cling closer and closer to their mother.

Sticky fingers holding onto hair, clothes, skin

anything that they can grasp.

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.