

# Underhand

Allison Kantack

I grew up in summer dugout days, where diamond, chain link shadows fell upon my sunblocked legs like fishnet tights. And I remember fidgeting in my cleats – my first pair of heels – crunching vagrant grains of sand and salty shells of sunflower seeds beneath my feet.

My mother always came to watch me play, while dad stayed home with the boys.

I asked my father once to teach me how to pitch.

“Can’t,” he said, “girls pitch underhand.” He only knew how to pitch like a man –

“ –and you pitch like a girl!” the bleacher boys would shout, reminding me of where I am.

I turn to my team, painstakingly ready to take the field. Every game, it seems, we bat second. When we take our positions, the neighborly chatter turns into primitive outcries: howls, yammers, and roars that drown in their own futility.

Still, our cheers and chants fight through the metallic ring of fences.