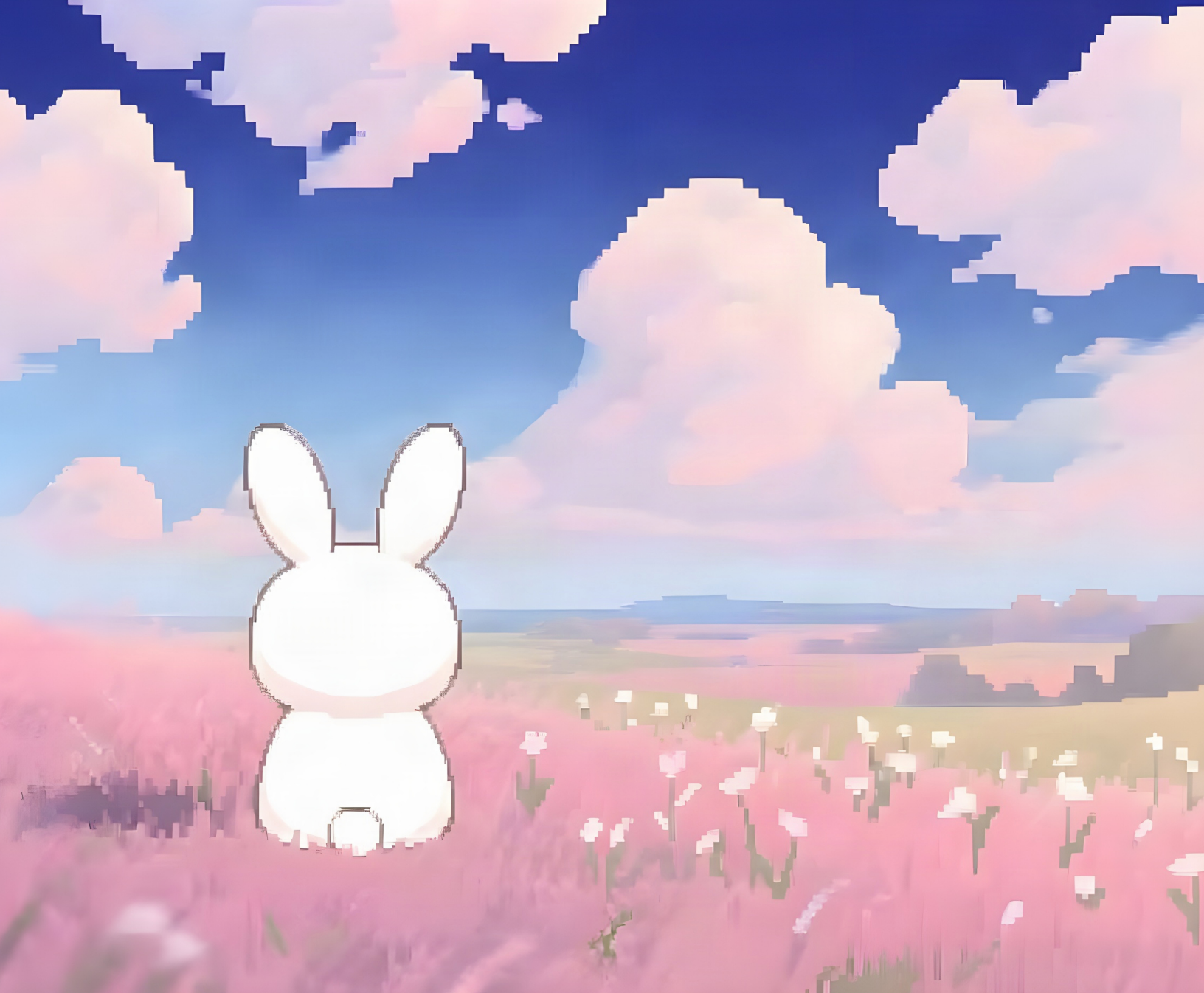






Bringing Back Somewhere Tucked in My Jansport the Trinket You Didn't Take

Karina Longo

Were it stardust, or a sliver of winter moon,
would you have stretched out your hand,
risking my finger curling around yours
for a nanosecond—
long enough to trap us in a spell?

Would it have mattered then, holding a star,
or at least the burial version of one,
electric affections sealed in cosmic light?

A silver pendant. For protection. What was I thinking?
When the threat is clearly me.

I should have bought
you a Kit Kat to share,
a new hat,
an evening beneath a starless sky.



You were wild & I was me

Zoe Davis

I begged you to stay, to weather it out, but you were a hundred names for never. Kiss, a fox-red scavenger, dreams rolling downhill with futures attached. You were the rainy day I couldn't save for. You'd already vanished, heart wrapped, intent on moving, brown paper fragile... yet you shook me, cored my apple heart, bit a chunk from my cheek and whispered how you were wild & I was me.



The Warmth of His Breath

Ashley Mangtani

I wake before light touches the water. The sky is pale, the sand still holding the night's chill. The deck breathes a familiar mix of smoke, whisky, and salt baked into the wood.

I press my nose into the grain, then nudge the hammock, but the canvas is cold and limp. He isn't here, and the morning feels hollow without his hand on my head.

I step off the deck and shake the stiffness from my legs. Sand stretches where the sea has fallen away, past the longtails, as if the water had forgotten how to return. I stand at the water's edge and stare at the exposed seabed, a stillness settling over me that I don't understand.

Clownfish dart from wilting anemones in the shallows and gasp for air. In the distance, Koh Kra rises from the seabed, bare rock where water should be.

A pair of drongos perched in the palms falls silent, their long koo-oooo cut short mid-note.

The air stops moving.

Figures emerge from the bamboo bungalows and the treeline, all of them facing the sea. A woman chopping coconut freezes, knife still in her hand.

I look for him among the shadows, but every scent is a stranger's.

The ground vibrates. People shout, arms thrown toward the horizon.

One man runs. The rest follow inland as fishermen wade toward the absent shore. I try to plant my feet, but the press of screaming people sweeps me away from the only place I know to wait for him.

I turn. Shells grind as my skin tears, blood trailing through the wet silt behind me. Still no sign of him.

The crowd carries me with it, though every instinct pulls me back. I search every pair of legs for the rhythm of his walk, but they do not know me.

The path tightens.

I have no choice but to follow. People rush in from every direction, pressed into the narrow spine of Walking Street.

A water truck slams past and grinds to a halt, filling the space wall to wall. Without him, I have no place here.

Bodies climb the truck's hood, spilling over the cab. The driver locks himself inside the cab. There's no space left to turn. I am pinned against the exhaust heat, nothing to those who don't see me.

I break free just before a motorbike rushes from the opposite direction. It skids into the 7-Eleven, wheels spinning.

Plastic shatters. I cower from the liquid hiss of steam, watching people I once trusted become a pack with no Alpha.

A hot gust shoves against me, thick with the stench of sulfur and churned earth. The smell takes me back to Songkran, to his hands around me as the sky cracked open above Lipe.

Then brown ocean pours between the buildings. It snaps a kayak like a dry twig, surging through the street. A crate of Chang shatters, a spray of green glass hits the wet pavement, and I wince as the surge pools behind the shards.

Tables vanish, wooden chairs splinter. The sidewalk's gone.

The samosa lady grips her stall. I see her fingers and crave warm crusts as everything slips from the counter, breaking apart in the foam. She is pulled under, her hand the last thing to vanish. The stall holds for a second, then follows her beneath.

My feet lose ground. I climb over backs and shoulders as the pressure behind pushes me uphill. There's no way forward. Bodies are packed tight, locked together like driftwood.

The ground becomes a churning mouth. I am no longer the hunter.

Water carries me from the street into the treeline.

Pillars of stone rise from the jungle, vines bound tight. Water tears through the weathered foundations, cutting channels in the mud. It carries me through the temple gates, snagging on mossy rock, driving me up into the shadow of the ruins.

This place smells of nothing living. Only ash and stone and something I have never been able to name. A shirt caught on a high branch snaps in the wind, carrying something familiar through the chaos.

Beyond the thick canopy sits a Buddha atop a lotus throne, watching as faded offerings are taken into the abyss. Humans come here to bow, leaving food beneath golden feet, but it does not move, and nothing is eaten.

The island's edge disappears into the water. Familiar shapes float under iron roofs as they are dragged down. I watch the tangled limbs, waiting for them to kick, but they remain limp.

I climb the steps, scrabbling for grip, and reach an altar. Two stone elephants are thrust from their pedestals, swept into a violent slurry, and disappear like pebbles.

The lower temple falls out of sight. Water ascends, quicker this time.

I run. Beams snap as the surge disembowels the temple. A stone pillar hits my side, crushing my ribs and dragging me into the churn.

I breach the surface. My lungs burn as I retch up bitter brine.

Through the noise, a human voice pricks my ears. I turn, neck snapping against the current.

He looms above me, one arm locked white-knuckled around the trunk while the other claws at the air between us. Before his face registers, it hits me—the scent of stale smoke and cheap whisky.

“Bobo. Come here, boy,” he says.

I rush toward him, paws scrambling. His hand plunges into the water and pulls me up against his chest. He holds me tight, pressed into the bark, his breath warm against my snout.

The water reaches us.

It climbs the trunk, filling the hollows.

His arms tighten. I press into him, my heart slowing to match his.

The water is above us now.

Then it takes us.





Fun Legs

Craig Kirchner

Vaguely, like in somebody else's dream,
one of those strange cell-phone settings ringing.
No it's the doorbell. Forgot we had one.
I slip on my Hyatt Regency robe.

*It's almost happy hour luv, and you're still in the sack,
you are so decadent.*

Molly was a cuddler, Winona Ryder eyes,
always with cashmere soft knit tops
that smelled like clean bed sheets
and fun legs in short skirts.

Fun legs was not mine, my roommate Bernie coined it,
but it was perfect.
She was hot, squirming on my lap,
telling me about her new guy

*He doesn't smoke or drink and said he wouldn't
know how to lie to me. Something, huh?
It's like he can read my mind. He's deep
and a little aloof, not like you at all*

She moved that twenty-something ass just enough
to add a whole new freedom to the afternoon.
Moving just often enough, *fun legs* keep coming to mind.
I ask her if he has pointy ears and says goodnight

with a split finger raised palm, thinking for sure
there must be a *Vulcan in the hen house*,
and knowing that an alien-like perversion
was quickly growing here at home.



Ambushed

Len Slatest

In this cynical age it's worth remembering that not all romantic relationships are either vapid or toxic. Life can be brutal, but damn, you learn.

"Sidney, we need to talk."

Those are words no husband wants to hear. *This sounds ominous.* They're seated at the kitchen table and he braces himself. Sandy gently grabs his wrists and pulls them toward her. "Do you remember what you said to me six years ago, when they told me I had cancer?"

"Um, no. I don't."

"Well, *I* do. You said, 'Let me help you.' The four most beautiful words I've ever heard. And you did." Sandy smiles. "You were there in my room when I woke up from surgery, and made the nurse's station wish they could file a restraining order against you.

"She could use another pillow. Her lunch is 15 minutes late. She hasn't been able to get any continuous sleep, with all the doctor and nurse visits.'

"All of that was real love, abiding love. More romantic than any love poem you could have written for me. It was action, not talk. But more than that, I don't know what. Something beyond romance, greater even than love."

Now Sandy is gently squeezing his hand, "We've been through a lot. There was that. And then, the time I lost my job."

Sidney studies his wife's face, delicate yet the slightest bit haggard, a record of where she has been, framed by her long blonde hair. Sandy's rescued existence was a purifying act, not only for her but him as well. It deepened his understanding of life. He still has her alongside him on this spinning rock in an otherwise indifferent, incomprehensible universe.

And the experience changed his tolerance of distractions from the larger truth. He is since irritated by pop music references to "booty", mumbling "we're more than colliding billiard balls" to no one at all.

"Things change, my dear," he hears Sandy continuing.

It was not long ago Sidney's friend Jack was on the receiving end of a "Things change" speech from his significant other, and this informs Sidney's expectation.

'Oh Sidney, we've grown apart, and I've met someone. There was no plan. It just... happened.'

C'mon, Sandy, you can do better than that. How about, 'You're forty-five, developing a paunch, and I can trade up.'

No! What an insecure bastard I am. Sandy is nothing like Jack's girlfriend. She's way above her league.

Sidney returns to his senses, and his focus shifts to the elephant in the room. *"Things change"? There's only one other explanation. Christ! The cancer has returned.*

"Sidney, dear Sidney," Sandy sighs.

His eyes are downcast. He can't face her. He loves her that dearly.

She is looking down at a report in her hand. "I've been to the doctor."

Sidney holds his breath.

She raises her head and smiles as brightly as the sun. "You've given me so much of yourself. Now *I* have something to give *you*. A son. Your son. Our son."

He freezes as it all washes over him.

Sandy laughs, adding, "I can't imagine two parents who will be more committed to a child, and to each other."



Anthology for the perpetually lonely and single {iiii}

Emily Stech

Lay in silence

Weight

Nothing

Heavy eyes

Dry

At night, when the air is at its driest

I put eye drops in my eyes.

The cold liquid warping around my hot corneas.

Sometimes

I have you do it,

We laugh.

My eyes thin

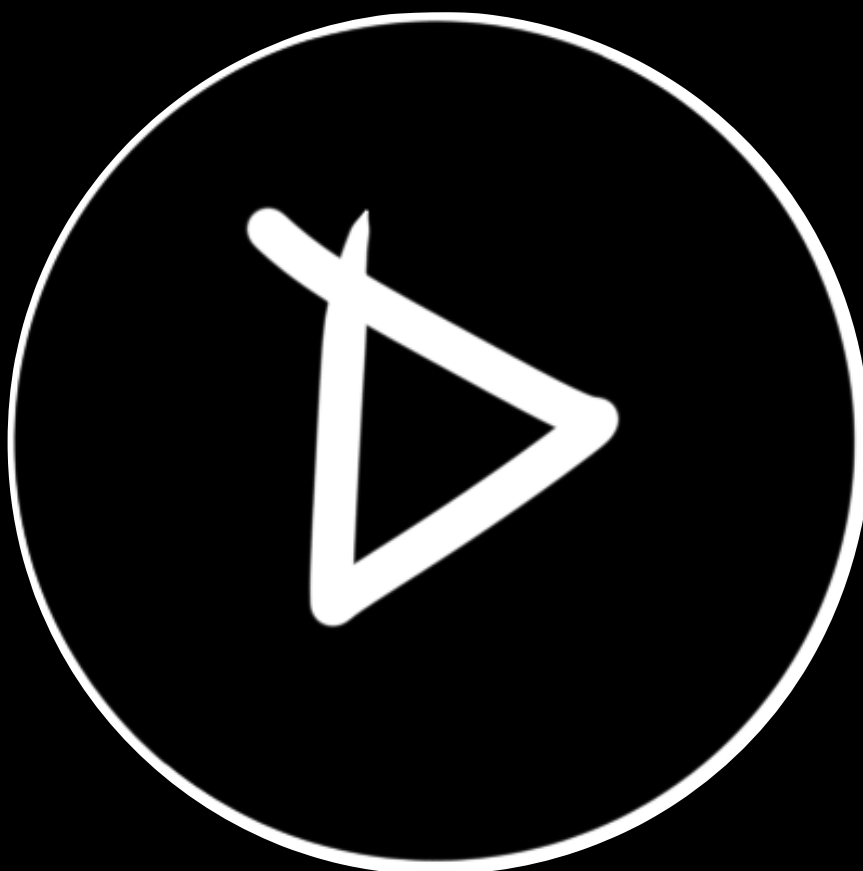
Become slit.

Lying on your arm

You tell me I need to stop laughing

You can't drop them into my thin eyes.

A false tear rolls down my cheek as I remember the scene.



url: minimag.press
subs: minimagsubmissions@gmail.com
substack: minimag.substack.com
twitter: @minimag_lit
insta: @minimag_write
book: <https://a.co/d/8bTfxxI>

“You were wild & I was me” by Zoe Davis
Twitter: @MeanerHarker

“Bringing Back Somewhere Tucked in My Jansport the Trinket You
Didn’t Take” by Karina Longo
Twitter: @TheDarkestStar_

“The Warmth of His Breath” by Ashley Mangtani
Website: <https://ashleymangtani.com/>

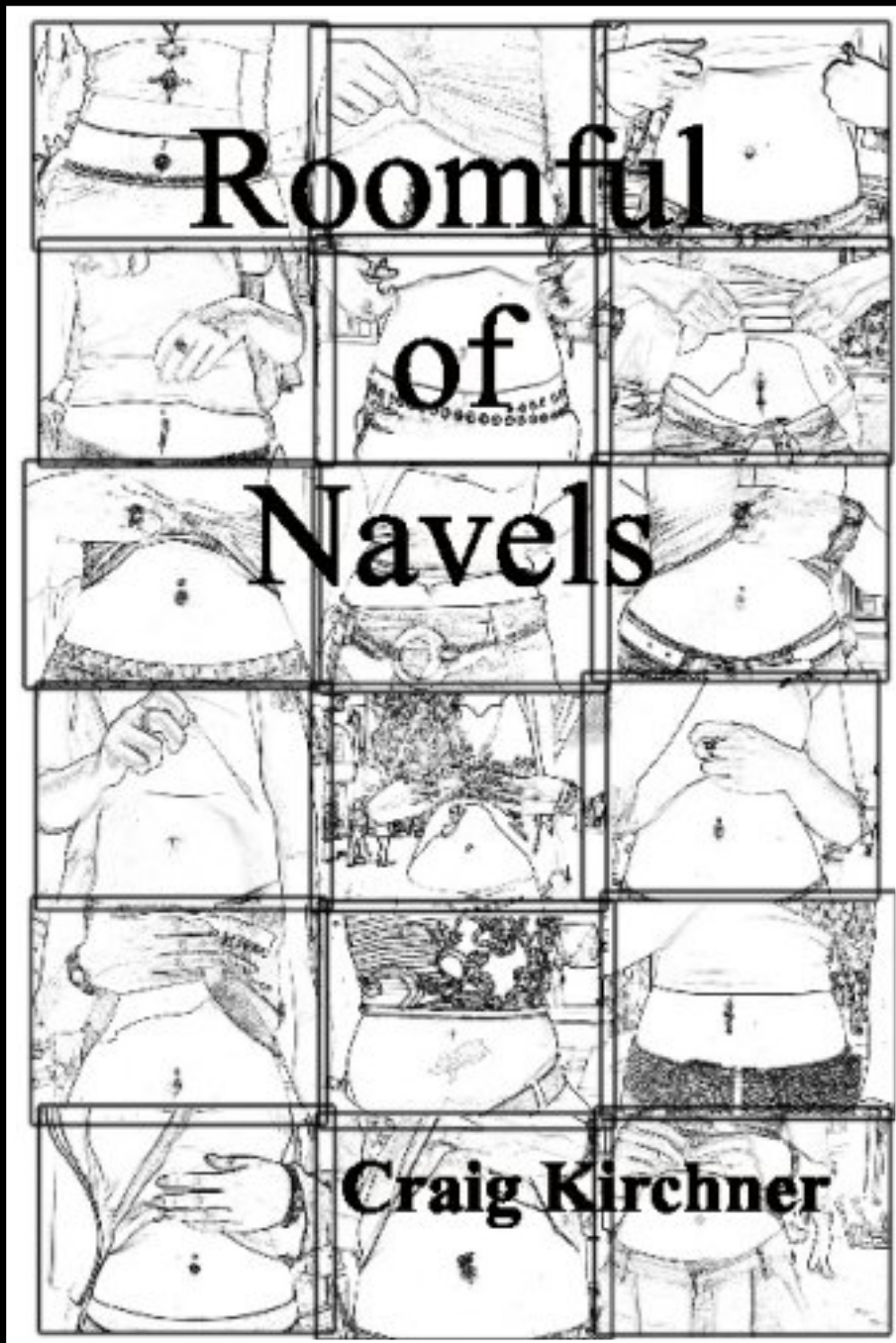
“Fun Legs” by Craig Kirchner
Bluesky: @craigkiirchner.bsky.social
Book: [Roomful of Navels](#)

“Ambushed” by Len Slatest
Gmail: disputedunit@gmail.com

“Anthology for the perpetually lonely and single {iiii}”
by Emily Stech
Twitter: @0eikeke

ISSUE217 edited and ai art by airport

ads



[click here](#)
(amazon)

ads

Chill Subs

Browse

Features

Community

About

For Editors

SLUSHPILE

Support us

Log in

Sign up

Get published.
Promote your work.
Grow as a creative.

(All without having a mental breakdown)

Log in

Sign up

We list 4134 submission opportunities for writers, 1478 for artists, with 1188 contests and a community of 9080 creators who've tracked 31249 submissions. We've been around 443 days and there's plenty more on the way.

See all statistics →

We're building a submissions manager!

Learn more

[click here](#)
(website)