



BYWAYS

JOURNAL OF ARTS AND LETTERS

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Byways

Journal of Arts and Letters

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Cover Art

Foliage – Margaret Hammond

Poster Art

Bird's Nest – Kendra Kimbrel

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Editorial Staff*

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Forward

Byways: Journal of Arts and Letters is an annual collection of creative works submitted by Central Texas College students. The works presented in this issue are original works that of drawings, paintings, poetry, photography, and short stories. The pieces showcased in this issue represent the best in their respective categories.

As with all creative work, whether art or literary, its purpose is to provide each artist's unique point-of-view. It invites discussion and an exchange of intellectual ideas between the creator and audience. This type of creative stimulation offers each of us with growth, expanding our levels of knowledge while encouraging us to think beyond the limits of today's boundaries.

There were many pieces submitted for inclusion for this year's *Byways* issue. The works included in this volume represent the very best of CTC students' creative abilities. For all authors and artists that submitted works not published in this issue, your pieces were commendable and showed great potential for your future development. Lastly, the editorial staff wishes all submitters the very best in whichever direction your artistic talents guide you.

Byways Editorial Staff

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Devour by Vivian T. Le



Drawing - 1st Place

Fingertips (scene excerpt) by Khoelle Basnight

Playwriting - 2nd Place

Cut to Hospital

Jasmine is seen walking out of a hospital with stitches in his forehead and his guitar draped around his shoulder. He initially looks to the nearest bus stop but decides to walk the whole way home instead. He tries to hum a tune, but it just doesn't come to him this time.

Mini montage of the walk home.

Jasmine enters his home and walks to his room. He immediately plugs his guitar into an amp and tries to play until something comes to him. He tries to string chords together, but it isn't the same. Jasmine then gets frustrated and begins to angrily play his guitar trying to force the creative process to work, but he only manages to cut his fingertip on a warn fret. Jasmine stares at the cut until a few drops of blood ooze out. He sets his guitar down and pinches the cut closed before super gluing it shut. Afterwards, Jasmine stares at his guitars, but cannot find it in him to pick them up.

Jasmine is sitting down in the tub while the shower runs. He then starts to cry uncontrollably.

Cut to Jasmine tearing up every piece of music he's worked on. Soon after, He throws all of his guitars into the back of his closet along with the amps. He slams the door shut and everything stays black for a while.

Jasmine is lying in bed and staring at the ceiling. He then hears a knock on the door. He climbs out of the bed and greets the stranger.

Stranger- Hey, we spoke on the phone recently. I'm here for the guitars.

Jasmine- Oh alright. Come right in.

The stranger is seen examining the guitars.

Stranger- So what kind of guitar is this exactly?

Jasmine- The one you're holding is a Gibson True Historic Les Paul. The other is a Gibson Hummingbird.

Stranger- Wow, that sounds serious.

Jasmine sort of rolls his eyes.

Stranger- How much do you want from them?

Jasmine- You're looking at about \$8,000 worth of equipment here.

Stranger- Hmm. Would you take \$5,000?

Jasmine stares at the guy.

Jasmine- You can just have them. I don't really care anymore.

Stranger- Are you serious?

Jasmine- Yeah, it's whatever.

Cut To: Jasmine just watches the guy drive off with his guitars in the back seat. He lets out a soft sigh and walks back into his home. He eats a slice of avocado toast, showers, gets dressed, and goes for a walk.

Mini montage of Jasmine walking through the city, stopping for coffee, etc.

Jasmine then sits on a bench and sips his coffee. Once he finishes it, he throws the cup into a nearby recycling bin. As he is doing so, one of the musicians he was once responsible for sees him and stops for a word.

Musician- Jasmine? Is that you?

Jasmine- Yeah, it's me.

Musician- How have you been? Are you feeling any better?

Jasmine- Yeah, I guess you can say that.

Musician- Well what have you been up to?

Jasmine- Just taking it slow, I guess. I've been spending a lot of time just thinking.

Musician- That's good to hear. I'm assuming that means you won't be back before the season ends, huh?

Jasmine- I guess not.

Musician- Well we'll see you again next season then. Take your time man.

Jasmine- I'm not sure if you'll even see me next season.

Musician- What do you mean?

Jasmine- I don't think I'm going to return after this incident. The music just doesn't speak to me anymore ya know?

Musician- I just think you need a break.

Jasmine- You don't understand. I try to pull from the same creative space that fueled my ideas for so long and yet nothing comes. I've gone deaf to the notes that once flowed effortlessly through me. After this whole incident, I'll never be a great as I could've been, my potential more than halved.

The musician stares on.

Jasmine-And you know what? Knowing that I am less than half the musician I could've been hurts more than anything.

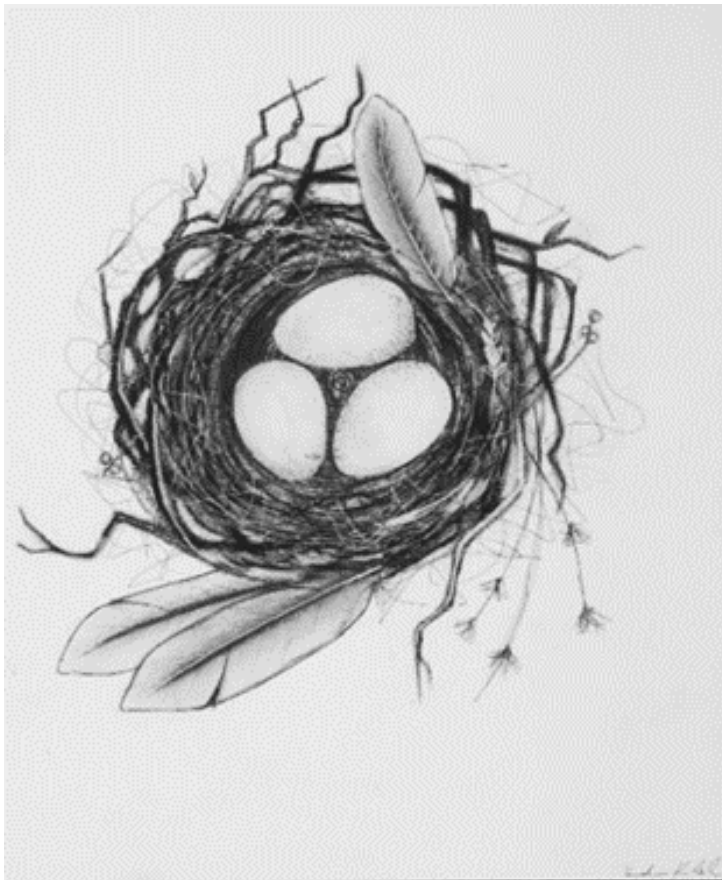
Musician-You don't have to beat yourself up. It's not that big of a deal. Just take your time and ease back into it.

Jasmine-(shrugging) I'll catch you later alright? Be safe out there.

Musician-Take care Jasmine.

Jasmine stands up from the bench and walks away. He gets back to his home, kicks his shoes off at the door, and gets back into his bed. Jasmine watches the ceiling once more. After a few moments he closes his eyes and begins to sleep.

Bird's Nest by Kendra Kimbrel



Drawing - 2nd Place, Poster Art

Loved Less by Joshua Howard

Short Story - 2nd Place

A feeling I embrace so freely yet, am so terrified to feel. It keeps you warm in the cold of night yet, can create a stone-cold heart. The sensation engulfs your body in a velvety blanket: a pleasant warmth undresses you completely, exposing portions of oneself unfamiliar to you. You are consumed in the mouth of the beast called love. In the belly of the beast you are surrounded by the serene sound of smooth jazz. A gentle, soft red veil covers your eyes focused on the one person who makes your heart beat faster and faster; throbbing, until it comes to an abrupt stop; seconds later it starts again but with a slower, peaceful pace. You are safe yet in so much danger. Love is a record you want to play on a loop for eternity. The disc becomes scratched, dusty, old and tired but with each new imperfection you hear when you play the song, you admire the unique melodic sound even more. The sweet smell of lavender and cinnamon fills the air, in a field of dandelions, tulips, roses, chrysanthemums the sky untroubled as the sunrays lay across your chest, a tender wind flows over the plain causing the flowers to dance. Not a thing could go wrong in this state of tranquility; all of this in the belly of the beast called love. Shaking, the stomach of the monster growls, the squishy, slimy, chunky undigested contents consumed before starts to fill the stomach again rising quickly—until you are a part of the substance— with each

passing second until it reaches its limit: forcefully spewing colorful remnants out of the mouth with you in it. No longer enveloped in comfort, out in the chilled air of the world filled with hate, with every breath, you feel death creeping closer; close enough that you hear him heaving in your ear, his breath so stale it crunches with each spoken word. You are no longer loved; you are heart broken. You become lifeless and cold like a single insignificant pebble at the top of Mount Everest. Nothing compares to the loneliness felt at the top of the peak of a place most people will never get to. The man or woman you held so high left you. The record that once played, only reminds you of what you once had and never will have again. The smooth jazz no longer smooth is rugged, unsettling, haunting. The field of dancing flowers no longer dancing, cut down by the man in black with a scythe. Petals fall slowly to the ground only to be stepped on by skeletons dancing the tango above them. The imperfections once beloved by you become perfect for your ongoing agony. Air no longer sweet like cinnamon, becomes tart, rotten, like walking through a retirement home, DEATH. The gentle breeze formed into harsh swirling winds coming from each and every direction push and pull against you keeping you in a constant manic state of repeating mistakes, arguments, anger, distress, depression. Dark clouds follow you wherever you go. Rain never stops; the droplets feel like fire burning your skin and as the droplets touch your skin, it sounds like a skillet frying a piece of meat. No longer peaceful and happy, rage and sadness flow out of your body like a teakettle on a

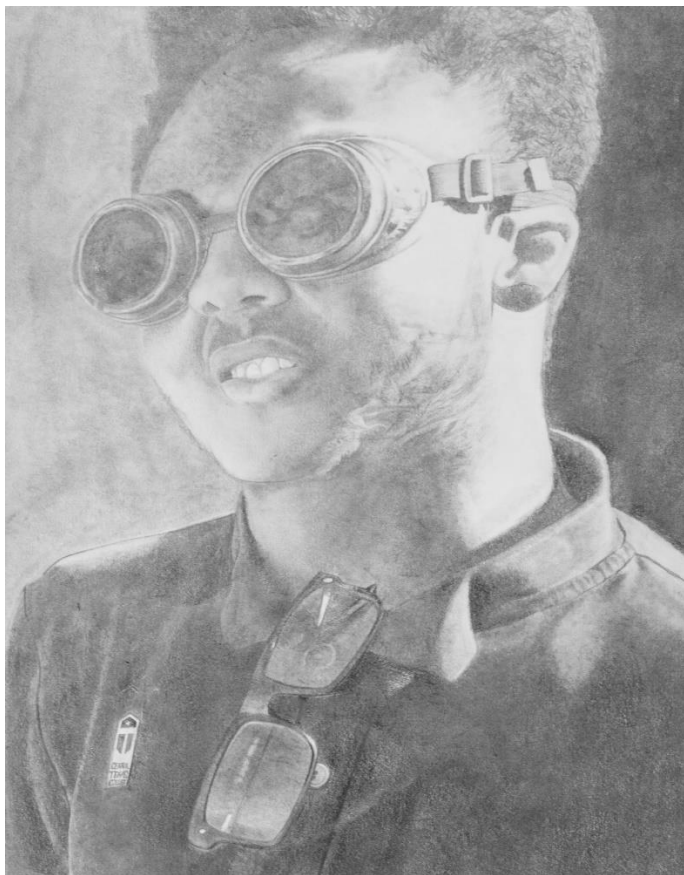
stove with too much water. Heartbreak, laying naked in the arctic, feeling your blood freeze over with every lost second, it becomes harder to move until your body gives up. The cold, you become used to it. You find comfort in being alone; you sit still in cold coffee that was not freshly brewed but sitting for hours until it feels lukewarm. But you are not warm, you are frozen on an isolated island. The lack of food has caused you to lose weight, frail bones shatter like a mirror dropping to the ground. Still frozen unable to move, a new velvet blanket appears mending the broken bones only to feel this again.

Alien Abandonment by Kalen Deal-Hunt



Painting - Honorable Mention

Self Portrait by Kalen Deal-Hunt



Drawing - 3rd Place

The Carnival by Gryphon Roberts

Poetry - Honorable Mention

As I wake, I see the sun

Swallow the moon and say, “Oh, how fun!”

I procrastinate while thinking this as I lay,

“What could be worth getting up today?”

Sleepily falling out of bed, I saw a note and it read,

“When you see this, come find me at the carnival” – Fred.

I didn’t want to, but I promised I would go,

Though I didn’t feel like moving any faster than slow.

I made my way there, and it was going great,

Then so many things distracted me that just couldn’t wait!

Laughter, fun, music and passers-by all turned my head.

I took it all in and completely forgot about...Fred!

Eventually, I decide to take a look at the sky,

And then realize how much time actually went by.

The sun coughed up the moon and left, and the moon shouted,

“Don’t ever do that again!” Then shook off the day, and the night began.

I saw Fred at the carnival with his head down; looking gloomy,

But then he looked up, saw me and suddenly seemed...happy!?

He said most of the rides were only for one, so he still had lots of fun.

I smiled back, full of relief “Well, I guess things worked out for everyone.”

Flowers of Joy by Lindsey Ball



Sculpture - 3rd Place

Autobiography of a Self-Hating Girl

by A. Matos

Poetry - 3rd Place

As I'm washing my face, I look into the mirror
I wipe it, to see myself a little bit clearer.
I observe the features of my face,
From the redness of my pimples to the dark spots and stains.
I wonder, "who in their right mind would appreciate this?"
Who's aspiring to be the one providing me with a good morning's kiss?

I stare down at my body,
My self-esteem becomes hungry,
But insults are all it can eat,
Since I make my negative comments sound like a grand feast.
I hear a crowd shouting boos,
saying, "Don't make us see you in the nude."

I weep while taking long showers,
while contemplating for hours and hours,
How come to today's society, "being fat is so in!"
But they also see it as a sin?
Oh, don't get me started with my hair,
Some people say that I don't even care,
"Just make it better! Just style it!"

Can't you see that dealing with it is hard as shit?!

It's tiring! Trying to dress up every day,
For some it's pleasure, for me it's pain.
The heavy backpack which I carry around mentally,
Doesn't motivate me to be in good shape or become
healthy.

Besides, why pretend to be someone I don't love or aspire
to be.

My life, my love evolves around my favorite books to read
Because for me that's the only place where I can be free.

Sometimes I ask: why don't I end it all?
Just grab a knife, and see me fall?
I chuckle, knowing well,
That if I do that, I'll go straight to hell.
Besides, this is just my over thinking,
They think that the best remedy, is just to fake it.

Suck it up and keep going,
You have a family that is loving
You have a job to appreciate
So, you don't really have much to hate.
Sorry, but I can't help it,
The past is the only partner who I've traveled with,
Bringing up memories, good and bad,
Now does that explain why I'm always sad?

Now, I'm aware that I have a family who loves me, my
friends who love me,
But my mind often portrays it as a dream. Tricking me into
thinking that it's just a fantasy.
Does anyone see the long nights I spend crying?
Does no one notice that I want to be like the people who
are dying?

My depression hugs me, that's why I don't like hugs
My anxiety kisses me, consuming me all the way to my
lungs,
My self-esteem beats me up with a book of reassurance,
These three things are a nuisance,
But don't worry. I really didn't expect anyone saying sorry,
it'll be okay
I may be overreacting, but at least pretend that I'm valid,
and leave me here on the cold floor to decay.

Mama, papa, sorry for being this way,
I don't want you feeling like all those things you did were
in vain
I tried being a good girl, a perfect daughter,
But I think it's best to replace me with another.

I'm a mess. My heart and mind are both wild,
Sometimes I'm an adult, but then I turn into a child.
I use it as a coping method, to be okay
Even though I'm afraid to be considered lame.

Sometimes I hold things in even when I want to explode,
But one day, I won't care anymore.

The Man by M'Ryle Spence



Painting - 2nd Place

And everyone will be surprised,
At the secrets I've been keeping all my life.
I would say more, but this is pretty much hidden in my own
self,
Now can someone please help me find professional help?

That way I can be a better person to this God forsaken
world,
Otherwise I'll be known as the Self-hating girl.

Tromp L'Oeil by McKensi Mcneil



Sculpture - 2nd Place

I am ME by LaDaise Thomas

Poetry - 2nd Place

I am a young black female

My complexion resembles smooth mocha

My hair is the deepest shade of brown

My eyes are the color of freshly brewed coffee

I grew up in the 21st century

And no, I was not treated fairly

I am a thief because of the color of my skin

I am uncivilized because of the curls in my hair

I am not equal because of the way I was born

I am loud and obnoxious

I am more likely to join a gang

I enjoy "music" that disrespects me

I am a nerd if I make all As

I "act white" when I speak perfect English

I overreact to being labeled because we're all the same,
right?

In this world I am not an individual

I am placed in a category

I am what people say I am

I cannot be different from the rest

Because of my melanin, my future is already set for me

I am innocent and my life will still be taken away from me

I am not here to chant black lives matter

I do not see color, I see character

Therefore, all lives matter to me

Black, white, yellow, red

We're all parts of the unique human race

And if one is made the superior then it is no longer a race,
but a death sentence

I am a human being

My complexion should not matter to you

My hair was wonderfully crafted by the creator

My eyes are the color of determination

I grew up in the 21st century

And no, I was not treated fairly

The color of my skin is motivation

The curls of my hair help me stand on my feet when I am
knocked down

One day, I will be considered a valuable soul because of the
skin I was born in

Salvation Through Lucifer by Tia French



Photography – 1st Place

Grim Matters by Shey Concepcion

Playwriting - 1st Place

Dedicated to Mama Tana, Angela Cuadra, Miguel Ramos, Angelica Vendrell, Judith Ramos Vendrell, Ivelisse Gonzalez, Natalie Concepcion and everyone who has helped me appreciate the cycle of life and death. Aku ki!

"El que tenga miedo a morir, que no nazca!" - My Cousin Natalie, according to my Abuela Judith, who thought my young and hip cousin so very wise! Although, I'm pretty sure those are Anuel AA lyrics...

Playwright's Note

It is a universal truth that humankind is as afraid of the unknown as they are fascinated by it. Death is certain for every living thing and yet no one really knows when they're born how they'll go; and the afterlife, despite what religious texts say, is one more among the great Unknowns. It is why people can put their lives at risk on a regular basis and still know they don't want to die when Death seems near. The purpose of Grim Matters is to dispel these fears of the Unknown. If people felt like what was on the other side was just the next part of a journey instead of a competition for glory or a trap door leading them to some flaming boogeyman if they fail, then maybe they might appreciate Life.

Grimwald and Grimline go through a journey in which they forget and relearn to be human as agents of Death, with whom I have a deep connection.

I hope this short play inspires people to seek and offer comfort in life to their fellow humans. Especially in such trying times.

Characters

Grimwald- male/androgynous, Senior Reaper, late 20s
Grimline (pronounced grim-leen)- female, Rookie Reaper,
early 20s

Setting

The In-between. It can look like anywhere, even Earth.

Costumes

Grimline: White dress

Grimwald: White suit or white pants and dress shirt

Props

White envelopes

White and black cloak or poncho.

Set

No set furnishings required

Scene 1

(A young woman dressed in a flowy white dress sleeps on the ground with her arms over her chest as if she is dead. She awakens startled, not noticing the young man watching her calmly. As she takes in her surroundings, the man, dressed in a white suit and a white and black cloak, approaches her.)

Grimwald: Good. You're awake.

Grimline: *(Turns to Grimwald)* Where am I? What is this place?

Grimwald: *(Gestures vaguely)* You are in the In-between.

Grimline: Who are you?

Grimwald: My name is Grimwald. I am the Senior Reaper assigned to train you.

Grimline: Wait... Senior Reaper? Train me? Train me for what?

Grimwald: To be a Reaper, of course. All who awaken here are agents of Death.

Grimline: Okaaaay... um cool? Just one question. What is my name? I can't seem to remember...

Grimwald: *(Smiling)* Your name is Grimline. *(Grimwald pulls out a white envelope and holds it out to Grimline.)*
And I have your first mission for you.

Grimline: *(Cautiously takes the envelope)*

Grimwald: Follow me. I have much to show you.

Scene 2

(Grimwald and Grimline sit together going through white envelopes. Grimline looks at his cloak with curiosity.)

Grimline: So why do you wear that?

Grimwald: Hmm?

Grimline: Your poncho thingy.

Grimwald: You mean... my cloak? *(Grimline nods)* This cloak is given to all Senior Reapers. You'll notice that rookies wear all white. But this cloak, it has white thread mixed with black. It's meant to convey an understanding of death that justifies our position.

Grimline: So, you have to work hard for it?

Grimwald: In a manner of speaking. Some people take more or less time than others. Time is irrelevant, however. It's the more intimate knowledge and understanding of the job that makes a Senior Reaper.

Grimline: When do you think I'll be ready?

Grimwald: *(Pauses)* Soon, hopefully. *(Grimwald stands and offers a hand to Grimline)* Now let's divide up these records. We have many dead and dying to tend to.
(Both exit)

Scene 3

(Grimline sits alone with her head in her knees. Grimwald approaches slowly from behind.)

Grimwald: Grimline?

Grimline: *(Jumps)* Grimwald! I didn't hear you.

Grimwald: I can see that. You seem upset. What's the matter?

Grimline: Nothing!

Grimwald: Yes, that's why you've come to cry in isolation.

Grimline: Shut up.

Grimwald: (*Sighs and moves to sit next to Grimline*) If you tell me what's wrong maybe I can help. (*Grimline says nothing*) Was it a mission?

Grimline: No.

Grimwald: A Nightmare? (*Grimline shakes her head*)

Grimwald: Was it-

Grimline: They HATE me!

Grimwald: Who? Who hates you?

Grimline: EVERYONE

Grimwald: Well, I'm not everyone.

Grimline: Well, no, I guess you're not. But the other reapers... they say things and I guess... I just take it all to heart.

Grimwald: (*stands*) Who? Take me to them and I will handle it.

Grimline: No! Just leave it. Besides, I have you and you're not everyone, right?

Grimwald: Right.

Scene 4

(*Grimline storms in after Grimwald*)

Grimline: I told you I'm ready for the cloak!

Grimwald: We've been over this, Grimline.

Grimline: Yeah, you don't think I'm good enough!

Grimwald: That is not true at all!

Grimline: Then what is it then?

Grimwald: You lack understanding of our purpose!

Grimline: We go down to the living world and escort them to the In between for debriefing before they go through soul conditioning for their next afterlife phase. What else is there?

Grimwald: You never offer them comfort or understanding of the life they lived!

Grimline: What's the point of that? They're dead!

Grimwald: Dying is terrifying for most people. Some of them leave behind loved ones. Or have unfinished business. It is not a matter of just collecting their souls but easing their transition. Until you learn this, you are not ready.

Grimline: But-

Grimwald: But nothing! One day you'll be ready. But not yet.

(Grimwald exits leaving Grimline standing alone.)

Scene 5

(Grimline sits alone staring at an envelope. Grimwald approaches and sits next to her.)

Grimwald: Are you alright?

Grimline: Yeah, I just... didn't expect it to be so hard? I took what you said to heart you know. So, the last few missions I tried to find reasons to offer them comfort but I realized that to do that I needed to understand what I was reading. These envelopes hold so much. Their entire life records. I escorted parents who left behind small children

and small children who left behind heartbroken parents. I saw the fear in their eyes when they... well, you know. And they have no one on this side at the start. No one but me. I finally feel like I have no choice but to comfort them. I don't have the option of being detached.

(Grimwald pulls her close and Grimline rests her head on his shoulder)

Grimwald: You finally understand. I'm so proud of you, Grimline.

Grimline: That's another thing I've realized...

Grimwald: What's that?

Grimline: I *wanted* to make you proud. I know it seems dumb, but it was important to me. *You're* important to me. You're all I have here. I don't exactly fit in with the other Reapers...

(Grimwald, cupping her cheek with his)

Grimwald: Grimline, I... you're important to me, too. *(He pulls away suddenly)* It's been a long day. You should rest.

Grimline: I should. *(She goes to lay down)* Will you be here when I wake up?

Grimwald: *(Pauses)* Yes.

Grimline: You promise?

Grimwald: I... yes.

(Grimline smiles and falls asleep. Grimwald stares at her for a moment and brushes his fingers through her hair and kisses her hands. He takes off his cloak and puts it over Grimline and then sits down a few feet away. He pulls out an envelope from his pocket and falls asleep.)

Scene 6

(Grimline wakes up discovering the cloak over her and begins to celebrate.)

Grimline: OH YEAH! I'm a senior reaper. What's good y'all? Senior reaper in the house! I got that White thread with the black thread! Whoop whoop! *(She spots Grimwald and goes to wake him, shaking him awake)* Grimwald, wake up. You gotta see this! *(He does not wake, and she shakes him harder, growing more concerned when he does not respond)* Grimwald! Grimwald, this isn't funny. Please, please wake up! You promised. *(She begins to cry as he remains unresponsive until she notices the envelope, taking it from his hands)* What... *(When she opens it, he awakens with a start)* Oh thank goodness you're awake! *(She tries to reach for him, but he jerks away)*

Grimwald: Who are you? Tell me where I am!

Grimline: Where you are? Why are you acting like you don't know me?

Grimwald: Because I don't!

Grimline: *(She looks down at the fabric of her cloak and reads the envelope as she realizes what has happened. She smiles sadly at her old friend.)* I understand... You don't know me. But I know you. I am Grimline, Senior Reaper. I am here to escort your soul through your transition.

Grimwald: I- I'm Alex. I think I died-

Grimline: Shielding your sister from bullet fire.

Grimwald: Did she-

Grimline: She's okay, Alex. And you will be too. (*She stands, offering her hand to him*) Follow me. I have much to show you. (*He takes her hand*)
(*Alex and Grimline exit hand in hand*)

End.

Oozing Through Society by Tia French



Painting - 3rd Place

Dream of the Cabbage Spirit by Bianca Wilson

Short Story - 1st Place

Lamb took in the cold grey sky with his golden-brown eyes and sighed.

How boring. He could be with his friends playing at the arcade right now but instead he was here at his Aunt's farm harvesting cabbages. For generations his family had worked these lands, they hunched over the soil, injuring their backs for cabbages they wouldn't even eat. No one would ever eat them. How stupid was that? People called their family soul gardeners, shepherds of alien souls waiting for reincarnation. Lamb called them dumbsheeples. No one believed in God anymore, much less angels or alien souls. Yet here he was, wasting away in the countryside where practically everyone ran the same business. There were families who reaped all sorts of souls; drug-addicts, adulterers and sinners as well as pure, religious souls. His Aunt reaped the souls of vegetarians, and of all things, cabbages. Lamb blinked at a cabbage the size of his head as his Aunt picked it up with her pale white hands.

"You harvest them like this and then," Lamb's aunt demonstrated for him to see. Then she pushed the wheelbarrow mounted with cabbages towards a well in the center of the cabbage patch and dumped them inside. Lamb peered at the deep black void, its darkness reflecting back into the pitch-black minuses in his eyes. He felt his boredom was just like the depths of the well, No end in sight. He stood

there for a while when something blocked out the sun behind him. Looking up he saw a tall black man with curled horns.

“You’re Gaia’s nephew?” His voice sounded deep and gruff.

Lamb froze for a second at the sight of the man’s red eyes. Normally a person’s eyes were yellow or brown but this guy.

..

“You must be Grimm.”

Lamb stood straight on his hooves and smirked, trying not to show his intimidation. His Aunt had told him about her creepy neighbor who reaped the souls of atheists, but he initially thought it was an understatement. Grimm’s eyes skimmed over Lamb and the well before looking to his field of wheat next door.

“You shouldn’t stare into there for too long, it’ll take your soul.”

He said this before walking away. Lamb listened to the sound of his large hooves fading away before sticking out his tongue. He scanned the cabbage patch for his Aunt and found her loading cabbages onto the wheelbarrow, she was like a machine. Loading, load after load. Bored, he watched the empty spots magically spawn in baby cabbages only to find himself frozen once again. He had assumed the cabbages were re-planted but before his very eyes the cabbages grew at a rapid speed. Is this what they meant when cabbages had souls? There were all sorts of cabbages in all sorts of different sizes and shapes. Some were misshapen, others had holes. Lamb followed his Aunt from afar and watched the cabbages regrow themselves in awe. As he

passed by a baby cabbage, it quickly flourished in his absence. Inflating up like a balloon. From the inside, a glow emerged and out sprouted the glowing torso of a sleeping human girl.

Cosmo woke to the sound of sheep conversing. The kiss of death was still fresh on her lips and as the recording of a screeching car played back in her mind, her indifferent expression immediately morphed to one of outrage.

“Son of a bitch!”

She had been hit by someone speeding on campus grounds while she was on her phone with her Mom. She had always been careful whenever she crossed the street, but not even she could predict the sudden acceleration of a car that had initially stopped for her to cross. It sent her flying into the air, like a seal tossing up a beach ball. Her plans of setting up a fundraiser for raising awareness about the lifestyle of farm animals would definitely flop in her absence and her favorite nephew coming to visit her would be devastated. Cosmo paused. *Why am I thinking like that? It's not like I'm-*

“Baaah!”

Startled by the sudden sound before her Cosmo looked up to see a person in a sheep mask. She looked at them from head to toe. Correction. It was a standing sheep wearing a dress. It had human hands, but its feet were definitely hooves. Cosmo was confused. Was it a full body costume? Or... she didn't want to finish the thought.

“Baaah.” said the Sheep Lady. Her gaze lowered and Cosmo traced it down to find that she was in her birthday

suit, her lower half was stuck inside a giant piece of cabbage twice the size of the Sheep Lady's head.

"Um..."

Cosmo looked at the Sheep Lady who appeared flustered as she kept shuffling from side to side.

"Baaaaaah!"

When the two made eye contact once more, the Sheep Lady backed away. Her pale white hands held each other, and she kept glancing off in the same direction as if hoping someone else would come and deal with this, whatever this was.

"Baah?!" A gruff sounding sheep voice called back.

Cosmo turned to see a sheep man appearing from a field of tall wheat. They were in a field of cabbage patches, and aside from the wheat field and cabbage patch that extended miles she couldn't see anything else. The sheep man held his scythe in one hand and a bundle of wheat in the other. He froze when he spotted Cosmo, then fainted, scythe and wheat dropping with him.

The Sheep Lady ran to Sheep Man's side. Cosmo was beyond confused at this point. *What is going on? Where am I and just what is this place, even?!* She watched the Sheep Lady carry the Sheep Man away and tried to climb out of the cabbage, but she found herself stuck. Much to further shock. *Wtf?!* She could not separate herself from the cabbage, it was almost as if someone had welded her torso to the cabbage or. . . Cosmo stiffened as a horrifying thought entered her mind. What if she was the cabbage? At that point she became desperate. She tried to lift herself out but no matter how hard she pushed, nothing happened, she only

found herself in pain. It was like pulling super glue off the skin, painful but not impossible. Cosmo stopped to catch her breath when she felt a strong poke.

“Ow!”

Cosmo looked down to see a little lamb in overalls poking her with a pitchfork. His mouth opened wide in awe when Cosmo cried out, and then he grinned. He began to poke Cosmo harder and harder until the pitchfork pierced right through.

Cosmo screamed and cursed at the kid who continued to poke her even as red liquid spilled from the holes in the cabbage. After one last stab, Cosmo’s eyes rolled to the back of her head.

She found herself staring up at a white ceiling in what looked like a hospital room.

“Baah!”

A short person wearing a sheep mask jumped onto her bed on all fours.

Cosmo punched them so hard, they fell off the bed and onto the floor. She sat up huffing and puffing, fists ready, when shortly afterwards, the kid stands, the sheep mask slipping off his head revealing a teary-eyed human boy underneath. He was her favorite five-year-old nephew, Jimmy, and he looked at her now with trembling upturned lips and a pink face.

“I’m sowee...” He apologized, huffing, as he held his head with one hand.

She held her nephew, kissed him on the head and apologized as a small sobbing sound escaped him that only

grew louder and louder as she caressed his head as if to decide whether he was more confused than apologetic and didn't know why he should be hit for trying to surprise her.

"Auntee, bhut th hell?!" In the end he decided to protest.

Cosmo wasn't listening, she held him in his arms thinking back to the vivid dream in the back of her mind.

Gaia arrived at the scene to see Lamb standing, pitchfork in hand, there was a red liquid all over his clothes and it seemed to be oozing out of the cabbage. This was unheard of, since when did cabbages bleed? Gaia scooped up the remains of the cabbage onto a piece of cardboard and carried them over to Grimm's house, he was more experienced with her in this field, he would know what to do.

Cosmo felt terrible and confused with the memory of her dream still fresh in her mind.

Her parents walked in to see the sight of their daughter, stroking the head of their wailing grandson, mentally she didn't seem to be all there, but she was alive, and they were relieved to see that she was okay. The doctor claimed her recovering consciousness to be a miracle.

When Grimm recovered, he explained to the startled Gaia and Lamb that what they had seen moments before was a miracle.

"When a soul dies, normally their consciousness does too. But that soul. . . was partially split from its body." Grimm explained this while lying in bed. He stuffed tissues in his nose.

“You mean?” Gaia realized the truth, her hand held her cheek as she glanced at Lamb, eyes widening in horror.

“It was still alive.” Grimm clarified.

Gaia looked at Lamb and frowned. Lamb didn’t notice this, he was staring into space, there were stars in his eyes, an infinite galaxy of glitter and void.

“Hey!”

At their lunch table, a friend of Cosmo’s joins her. She was still in the hospital, but she had managed to befriend a few of the patients.

“Hi Fred.” Cosmo smiled in greeting. Fred paused, before her lied a glass of water. He sat down slowly before pulling the plastic off his utensils.

“Are you gonna eat or...”

Cosmo blinked at him; her gaze shifted to his tray. There was rice, a bowl of beef stew and cabbage. When was the last time she’s ever seen cabbage? As he picked up his plastic black fork, Cosmo’s eyes seemed to widen, the next thing she knew her hand was reaching across the table. She snatched the steamed cabbage and threw it against the glass of the window. Staring at the glass, transfixed at its reflection. There were sheep in the glass. Cosmo squinted before realizing that the sheep in the glass were reflections of the patients dining in the cafeteria. She stared at them all now, wolfing down their food ravenously. Teeth tear into meat, loud smacks and gulping.

That’s right, this whole time she believed that humans were the problem, preying on other animals but in all actuality, weren’t animals just as guilty? They preyed on

other animals too. If they could do it, why couldn't humans? Even the plants, the plants were living things defenseless against herbivores! This planet thrived off murder!

"Ohmigosh." Cosmo held her head, her eyes the size of jaw breakers.

Taking her behavior as abnormal Fred already left to notify a doctor. Though she seemed perfectly fine on the outside, she hadn't been eating. This became a concern to the doctor and her parents.

"Why won't you eat, dear?" Her Mom sat next to her daughter on her bed in a hospital room. Cosmo shook her head.

"I don't want to eat death..."

Her mother exchanged confused looks with her Father. It was eventually decided that she needed counseling. The counselor, however, recommended she had an eating disorder and needed to be rehabilitated. After recovering from her injuries, she was sent to rehab where she was fed mush, she couldn't make heads or tails of what she was eating and when she became hungry enough, she didn't seem to care. Later, the foods became more solid and distinct. They thought she was getting better.

Jimmy watched them bring her in through the door, with wide eyes, for a second, he almost didn't recognize his favorite aunt who he hadn't been allowed to visit for nearly two years. She had been skinny before, but her skin looked so pale and thin now, she looked like death. Relatives greeted her and asked her how she was. She barely responded, nodding every now and then, smiling at

someone's joke. Her behavior was perfectly normal but when it was time to cut the turkey, Cosmo blocked the knife with her hand just as her mother stabbed into it. Blood spilled out onto the turkey spoiling everyone's appetites. A hush washed over the room.

"You can't eat it!" Cosmo protested tears in her eyes. Jimmy's vision zoomed in on her hand, at his aunt with a knife stuck in her hand, who continued to protest against eating turkeys. Against eating anything. She proposed they all drink water. Everyone sat stunned, no one remembered themselves until she keeled over. Then everyone was scattering about like ants looking for the first aid kit, others helped her up, while someone called the ambulance.

Grimm shook his head.

He walked out to Gaia's field and stared at the spot where the cabbage spirit once was.

"It's no good now. It can't live like this or it'll go bad."

Lamb stared up at Grimm curiously. He had fainted before, but he was beginning to think Grimm was pretty cool. He was so knowledgeable about stuff like this.

"You have to dump it." Grimm looked to Gaia who handed the pulverized cabbage to Lamb who stared at it, eyes shimmering.

"You should apologize." Gaia tells him. "To the soul."

Grimm and Lamb just stared at her. She blinks at the two, eyes watering and after enduring their blank stares a bit longer, walks away. A hand lifting up to her mouth to muffle

the sounds of her sobs. Lamb walks to the well and releases the cabbage. It broke apart long before it reached the bottom.

Jimmy stared at the pale body before him and held her hand. She was cold, as cold as ice. The wails of Cosmo's parents and some relatives were all background noise. He couldn't understand why his Aunt was lying on the bed sleeping. He would look back on this moment later on in his life and make a note of the things she said that Thanksgiving Day whenever visiting his grandparents.

"It seemed to me that Cosmo just couldn't come to terms with being human." Her Father noted. Jimmy blinked at him recalling Cosmo claiming that this planet thrives off death. It was a reality, not many people realized, and one, she as a vegetarian most certainly could not accept.

Beyond the Surface by Keyonda Rhoden



Photography - 2nd Place

New Life by Ashley Taft

Poetry - 1st Place

No more pain, no more tears
No more fights, and after all these years
I've survived, I've begun a new life
No more fear of making a mistake
Walking on eggshells, afraid they would break
No more hiding behind a smile so fake
Sadness piercing through my heart like a stake
I'm so much better without you
I didn't know just what to do
Cling to misery just a bit longer
Saving my sanity made me stronger
Your absence made my heart grow fonder
Of life without you, now I break into song
I'm finally free! I yell from the rooftops
Free to be me, and no one can stop me
Bitter tears for all the lost years
Put the past behind me, a bright future so near
A heart no longer shattered, a vision so clear
It's time to start a new life, and I have no fear.

A Barber's Teapot by Colter Barber



Sculpture - 1st Place

Byways 2021

Byways is open for all currently enrolled CTC students to submit their original art or written works during the time submissions are accepted.

Types of Works That Can Be Submitted:

Poetry, Short Stories, Short Plays, Creative Non-Fiction, Drawings, Sculpture, Paintings, Jewelry, Metal Working, and Photography.

Submission Requirements:

Written Works should be in Word (.doc, .docx) or Rich Text (.rtf) formats.

Artworks should be submitted as digital images in any .jpg format.

All submissions should include the name of the piece, your name, e-mail address, CTC student ID number, and your physical mailing address.

Please limit your submissions to one work per category.

Submissions are accepted from the beginning of the Fall semester until the third week of February.

Contact Information:

For more information about *Byways*, or to submit items for consideration, contact: Byways@ctcd.edu.

“Love is a record you want to play on a loop for eternity.”

Loved Less (Howard)

“Laughter, fun, music and passers-by all turned my head.”

The Carnival (Roberts)

“It is a universal truth that humankind is as afraid of the unknown as they are fascinated by it.”

Grim Reaper (Conception)

“You must be Grimm.”

Dream of the Cabbage Patch Spirit (Wilson)

“I’ve survived, I’ve begun a new life.”

New Life (Taft)

