

Byways

**Journal of Arts
and Letters**

**Spring
2022**

Byways:

Journal of Arts and Letters

Spring 2021

Cover Art

Connection by Angela Areu

2023 Poster Art

Relaxing by Kiki Kelly

Hobby Memorial Library

Editorial Staff

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 of digital art, drawings, metalwork, musical lyrics, musical scores, paintings, photography, playwriting, poetry, sculpture, and short stories. This year, a new category, musical scores, was added. The pieces showcased in this issue represent the best in their respective categories.

The journal invites discussion and an exchange of intellectual ideas between the creator and audience. This type of creative stimulation offers each person the opportunity for growth, expanding our knowledge levels while encouraging us to think beyond the limits of today's boundaries.

Students submitted many pieces for inclusion for this year's *Byways* issue. The works included in this volume represent the best of CTC students' creative abilities. For all authors and artists that submitted works that were not published in this year's 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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Enchanted Winter

Jade Elisa Garcia

1st Place Photography



“Frozen”
Asriel Jackson
2nd Place Poetry

It's... cold in here.
Cold... A choice I understand.
I can stand...
But would I rather sit?
Maybe... It's a decision I know too well of.
This or That...
One or Two...
Yes or No...
Can't I just be... cold...?
Can't I just... stand...?
Can't I just... understand...?
Can't I... decide...?
Why...?
Why can't I...?
Decide...
Decisions...
Choices...
Answers...
It's what I understand...
What I experience...
What I... decide...
Do you...?
Do you understand...?
Do you answer...?
Do you... choose...?
Do you feel... cold...?

Letters (3 Views)
Amber McCallister
1st Place Sculpture



“Last Dance with Jack (Whiskey Tango Foxtrot)”

Ashley Demers
2nd Place Music Lyrics

Sun so bright, hide my eyes and wish for night
Can't wait for your touch, your embrace, it just feels so right
And yet so wrong...Honey, be strong
As time draws near, I think of my next move
Limited time of clear, conscience yelling, “What do you have to
prove?”
“Oh honey you just don't get it”
“Why don't you give me some credit?” “Okay...”
“I gotta work on my moves, my grace...
Nothing to prove, but I gotta put him in his place.”
He betrayed me, totally played me
Got me high and made me smile
Felt it was worthwhile...
Oh he teased me, oh it was quite pleasing
In the darkness, I felt his lust, his dark side
Took his hand, he spun me into darkness
His web of lies, looked in his eyes, into the spark
No, no, I must fight, I must fight his lies
Don't you see? Don't you see past his disguise?
There's a light...at the end of the tunnel of supposed delight
Supposed delight, happiness in disguise
Can't you see through his disguise?
Can't you hear all his lies?
And yet, he keeps fighting, fighting to the surface
Hang on, do you want him to overtake us?
Oh just for one moment more...
Give in and be Jack's whore...
No, I will not give in.

No more Tennessee Honey-soaked sin
I won't let the devil win
I won't let Jack back in
This time, I'll run to the door
And I won't go back anymore
Won't look back no more
And then some nights come
Unknown night's secrets start to hum
Jack's fatal somber lament
Accompanied by a seductive honey scent
As I think I may give in
I put on the armor, HE gets the win
All the memories come and go
This will be your final show...
Jack, my dear, it's time I let you go.

5:45 PM
Alex Araujo
3rd Place Photography



Same Picture

Natalie Anne Rogers
3rd Place Music Lyrics

Chords:

G D Em C

Strumming:

1↓ 2↓ 3↓ 4↓ (*repeat throughout song*)

Intro:

G D Em C | G D Em C

Verse 1:

G

Swingin' on the front porch

D

Learnin' to trust more

Em

Cryin' cause her friends don't C

Like her anymore

Instrumental:

G D Em C

Chorus:

G D

Sometimes we take life's pen

Em

And draw the same picture

C

Over and over again

G D

And sometimes we learn from mistakes

Em C

Even when it causes a little bit of heartache

Instrumental:

G D Em C

Verse 2:

G

Cryin' on her bed

D

Cause' there's too much in her head

Em

Not thinkin' that it's possible

C

To get up and try again

Instrumental:

G D Em C

Chorus:

G D

Sometimes we take life's pen

Em

And draw the same picture

C

Over and over again

G D

And sometimes we learn from mistakes

Em C

Even when it causes a little bit of heartache

Bridge:

G D Em

We can never draw the picture

C G D

The exact same way but we can

Em C G

Redirect our life's pathways

Instrumental:

G D Em C

Chorus:

G D

Sometimes we take life's pen

Em

And draw the same picture

C

Over and over again

G D

And sometimes we learn from mistakes

Em C *(fade out)*

Even when it causes a little bit of heartache

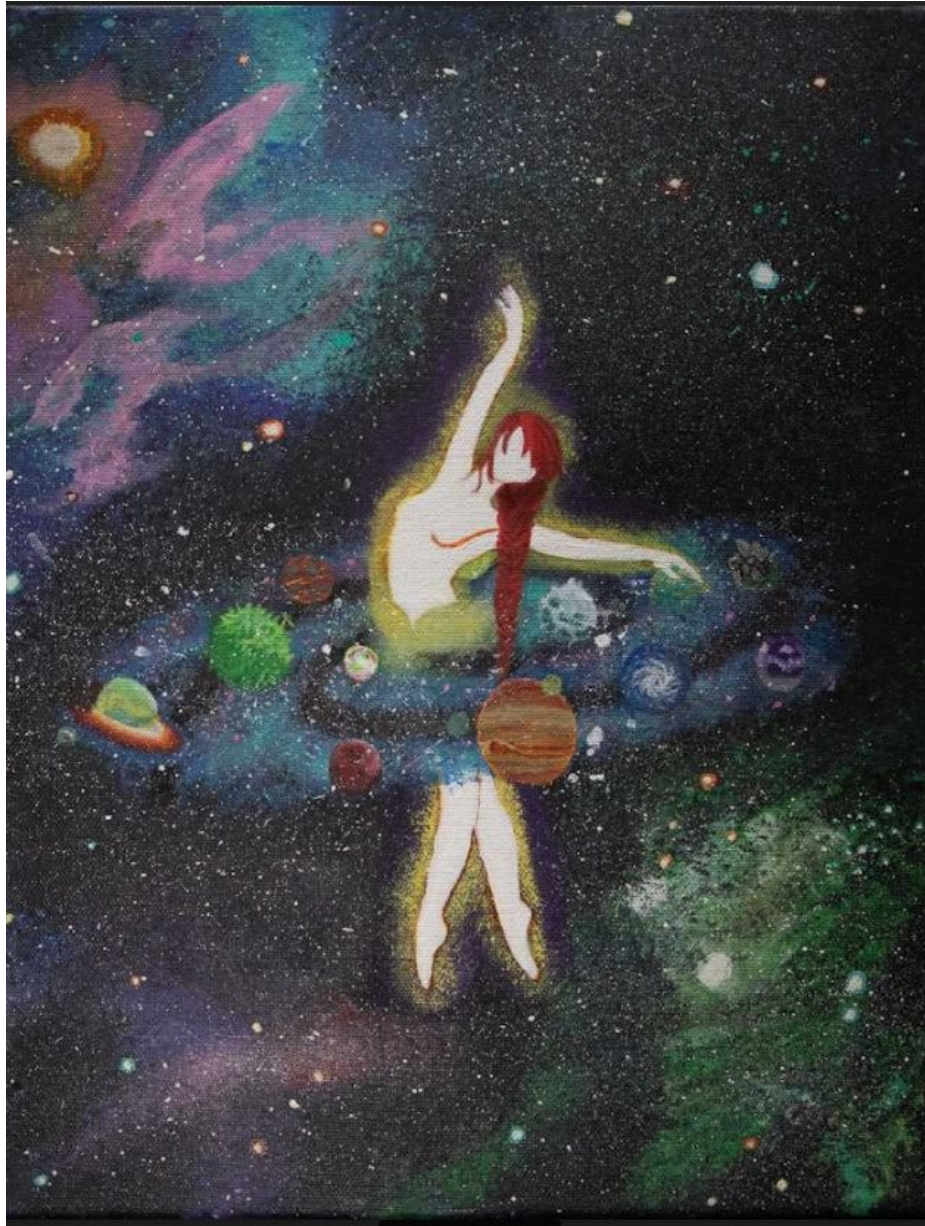
Almost There

Yazmin Ortiz Colon

Honorable Mention Digital Art:



Reach Into the Universe
Champaine Belford
3rd Place Painting



Harmonic Dance

Carrah Cemone Robinson
1st Place Music Score

$\text{♩} = 70$

Violin *mp*

Violin *mp* *mf*

Violin *f* *mp*

5 6

Vln. *f*

Vln. *f*

Vln. *mf*

9

Vln. *f*

Vln. *f*

Vln. *f*

13 $\text{♩} = 110$ 14

Vln.
 Vln.
 Vln.

17

Vln.
 Vln.
 Vln.

21 24

Vln.
 Vln.
 Vln.

25

Vln. Vln. Vln.

29

31

Vln. Vln. Vln.

33

Vln. Vln. Vln.

37 rit.

Vln. Vln. Vln.

$\text{♩} = 60$
41

mp *mp* *f*

Vln. Vln. Vln.

45

f *f*

Vln. Vln. Vln.

49 50

Vln. Vln. Vln.

53

Vln. Vln. Vln.

$\text{♩} = 110$
57

Vln. Vln. Vln.

6

61

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vln. 3

♩ = 100 ♩ = 85 ♩ = 70

65 rit.

69

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vln. 3

Detailed description: This is a musical score for three violin parts (Vln. 1, 2, and 3) across measures 61 to 69. The score is written in treble clef. Measure 61 shows Vln. 1 with a continuous eighth-note pattern, while Vln. 2 and 3 have rests. From measure 62 onwards, all three parts have notes. The tempo markings are ♩ = 100 at measure 62, ♩ = 85 at measure 65, and ♩ = 70 at measure 68. A 'rit.' (ritardando) marking is placed above a dashed line starting at measure 65. Measure 69 is the final measure of this section, ending with a double bar line.

Use the link below to listen to this piece.

<https://flat.io/score/608760d7c06d8e3de420116e-harmonic-dance>

Relaxing
Kiki Kelley
2nd Place Photography
2023 Byways Poster Art



“Shallow Grave”

Yazmin Ortiz, Yahirnitza Torres Cruz, Javier
Turner, Jeben Camba, Deandra Jones, Haley

Redden

3rd Place Poetry

A frail and saddened frame entered the crowd’s view,
a husk of the woman was spoke

“A husband and dear friend-my dear Fortunato
a year or two has passed since I’ve asked how you fared,
Since we’ve been blessed with your presence
Now cold wind, a stale air, is your only comfort
whether you breathe the same air as I, or none at all
Many have gathered for the mourning of the latter”

“ ‘Twas mentioned it was impossible you are seeing
‘Twas mentioned they apologized for your empty lungs
‘Twas mentioned they pray for your warm fingers to fold back
into
My dearest, Fortunato!
I hope for the last, for your lady yearns for your safe return
I listen naught to the negative thoughts-for my heart still burns
for you”

“A man of nothing but purity was he!”
More cries erupt from sewn lips
“Never a failure to make us chortle”

A cook tumbled to the ground with a kick
Sweet liquids of amontillado fall from its lips
“Our dear Fortunato, have a sip, May you rest well and long”

The soft hands of the lady trusted the enemy forward
His words,
masked as dark as the one he wore that fateful day,
were the only sounds for miles
“We’ve gathered here today for our missing friend
brother,
or husband,
the only sin committed was a body not be buried with a stone for
your name
Our Fortunato, my dearest friend, you will be dearly missed
May a glass be risen for our fallen brother”
Montresor approaches the stone head

“As cunning as a snake,
be ambitious and shed your skin
be reborn into a new life.
bite the crushing ankle with a grin
our dearest friend, Fortunato,
May you find your personal field of blue.”

My tongue could no longer hold
“Not buried under a retched stone,

But perhaps buried deep within your catacombs
If you treat your friends most dear with such just,
I fear what you may do to your deepest enemies.
Your ‘dearest friend’, Fortunato, waits for your response”

Reverse
Kiana Burgwyn
Honorable Mention Digital Art



Enchanted Pond

Heema Solanki

1st Place Painting



“From Poemma”

Kaeden Tony Nelson
1st Place Playwriting

CAST:

Emma:

Emma is the protagonist. Her personality is tough and rude, yet fun when the time calls for it. She is oftentimes unaware of other people’s emotions. Because of this, Emma always believes she is right and that everyone else is wrong.

Narrator:

Have another person to represent the Narrator. This is an older Emma reflecting on her past.

Visuals: Emma is white with either blonde or dyed-black hair.

Daniel:

Daniel is Emma’s best friend. Daniel is very kind and quite intelligent; however, he has issues with his self-esteem and self-worth. He is in love with Emma because she helps him feel like he is worth something.

Visuals: Daniel is Hispanic. You get creative freedom here.

Jeremy:

Jeremy is the ‘hottest boy in school,’ and, as such, Emma is all over him. Jeremy’s nature is very curious, genuine, and caring. He loves playwriting and plans on writing and performing his own play as a senior. He doesn’t want to be with Emma, though; he wants to be with Daniel.

Visuals: “His skin [is] a light shade of caramel with the

handsomest, smoothest freckles.”

Joemmie:

He’s a member of the Drama club. He is gay, but that isn’t his entire personality (BECAUSE BEING GAY ISN’T A PERSONALITY). There isn’t much more to say about him, though.

Visuals: Make him black; trust me.

Edgy Teenagers:

Have a group of edgy teenagers ready backstage for any Poetry Café scenes.

Visuals: They look edgy.

ACT I (SCENE III):

[Enter NARRATOR.]

NARRATOR: I had fallen completely in love with Jeremy after talking to him then. It was love at first sight, and I felt it. What I didn’t then realize was that I was falling, and I was soon going to suffer because of it. In the end, Daniel didn’t come back to that night’s Poetry Café, but it didn’t matter. I had Jeremy’s company. The night was destined for greatness!

[Have JEOMMIE set up the snack stand on the right side of the stage. Do so in a fashion that is loud and obvious to the audience.]

[EMMA continues looking for JEREMY, sticking his face out of the left side of the stage. EMMA notices JEREMY.]

EMMA: (Quietly screeches in joy, then begins whispering.) Hey, Jeremy! Where are you going?

JEREMY: (Under his breath.) Dammit.

[JOEMMIE picks up the snack stand and places it in the center of the stage. Focus light on this stand. JOEMMIE ducks his head under the stand.]

JEREMY: (Aloud to EMMA, nervously.) I was just going to grab a snack.

EMMA: Ooh, I'll go with you!

JEREMY: (Sighs) Yeah, sure.

[EMMA and JEREMY go to the snack stand together. JEREMY buys spicy potato chips, and EMMA buys a cinnamon bun. The two immediately begin eating.]

JEREMY: (Whilst crunching.) Hey, what's your name, may I ask?

EMMA: I'm Emma, vice president of our school Poetry club!

JEREMY: (No longer crunching.) Who's president?

EMMA: The guy you just saw, his name's Daniel.

JEREMY: Yeah, that makes sense.

EMMA: I heard you were in the Drama club?

JEREMY: I think you've got the wrong Jeremy.

EMMA: I'm pretty sure you're the only freshman named Jeremy.

JEREMY: I think you may have me mistaken with Joemmie.

EMMA: I did not mix you up with the gay dude; you two look nothing alike, and you two act nothing alike.

[JOEMMIE sticks his head out from the snack stand.]

JOEMMIE: Why are you two talking about me?

EMMA: Someone told me that you were in the Drama club, but I thought that friend said Jeremy.

JOEMMIE: No, Jeremy's in the Drama club; he's actually the club secretary.

JEREMY: (Mumbles to self.) Dammit.

EMMA: Wow, that's so cool! Thanks, Joemmie!

JOEMMIE: You're welcome, Emma. You're my girl, after all.

JEREMY: You got my secret now. You happy?

EMMA: Well... not exactly. Why are you at the Poetry Café if you're a Drama kid?

JEREMY: See, it's weird. I'm not exactly a fan of poetry, but...

(Pauses and looks downward.)

EMMA: ...but what?

JEREMY: (Sighs) I want to one day become president of the Drama club, and I want to direct the school's next great play. My last goodbye as a senior will be putting that play together and sitting as part of the audience to watch and experience it the way all plays are meant to be experienced: a grand performance on a grand stage. The only thing is that I don't know how to write poetry, but that is what I want my play to be about. That's why I'm here.

EMMA: Wow, that's pretty cool, actually! You mean that you've come here to learn how to write poems?

JEREMY: Yeah, but I'm really just here to learn to appreciate poetry, like, what makes poetry good poetry.

EMMA: I can help you with that!

JEREMY: You can?

EMMA: Of course, I can help you with that easily! Who'd be better to help you than me?

JEREMY: Probably Daniel...

[EMMA looks irritably at JEREMY.]

JEREMY: (Chuckles) I mean, no one.

EMMA: Good. I'll read you a poem of mine, and you can tell me what you get from it...

[EMMA begins reading *My Pencil*.]

[My Pencil]

Thank you,

My pencil,

For writing with me!

Bless you,

My pencil!

Your kindness and faithfulness are unrivaled,

And your loyalty unmatched...

But without your eraser.

When I draw faces, they always look mad,

Because there's no fixing my mistakes,

And there's no forgiving my sins.

Without your eraser,

*I can't make right.
Without your eraser,
I can't be sorry...
Can I?*

*I'm sorry,
My pencil,
For you deserve better.
And I'm sorry,
My pencil,
You've always loved me;
That I couldn't see.*

*I need you,
My pencil.
You make life brighter.*

*The mistakes I've made...
Let's write about it!*

JEREMY: What the hell is all that supposed to mean?

EMMA: What does the pencil remind you of?

JEREMY: Honestly, my ex-girlfriend.

EMMA: Okay, now I want you to read the poem aloud, but whenever you read “pencil,” I want you to say “ex” instead.

JEREMY: I’m sure that’s not gonna—

EMMA: (Interrupts) —Just do it!

[*JEREMY* reads aloud My [Ex]. Afterwards, he is struck with awe.]

EMMA: (Looks at Jeremy.) See, you got a whole new meaning out of it!

JEREMY: It’s cooler and all now, but my ex and I never wrote together.

EMMA: Well, part of poetry is comparing two unlike things through words. What *did* you two do together?

JEREMY: We would always...

[*EMMA* looks at *JEREMY*, prompting the remainder of his response.]

JEREMY: We would always role-play with each other.

[There is a notable pause, and *EMMA* speaks only to break it.]

EMMA: (With wide eyes.) You... mean drama role-play, right?

JEREMY: Yes, but as our D&D characters.

EMMA: Aww, that’s so cute that you two did that together.

JEREMY: (Embarrassed.) Okay, but what does any of that have to do with poetry?

EMMA: (Looks to the audience.) Character.

EMMA: (Looks back to Jeremy.) A friend of mine helped me write that poem, and the same friend taught me the meaning of poetry:

to draw your own meaning. He told me that, “It doesn’t matter, the meaning the poet puts on the page, if you, the reader, get another one, but it’s bound to happen because we’re all different.

JEREMY: That friend was Daniel, wasn’t it?

EMMA: Yeah, actually! How’d you know?

“A friend of mine... taught me the meaning of poetry ... He told me...” I put the pieces together and took a good guess.

EMMA: (Smiles childishly.) So, would you like to talk to Daniel?

JEREMY: I would love to talk, but I’m sure he hates me, talking in tongues and staring me down. You saw him.

EMMA: You’d make great friends!

[Exit EMMA and JEREMY, side-by-side. Set the stage dark and with several EDGY TEENAGERS. When EMMA and JEREMY re-enter, focus some light on them. As poets—the edgy-looking teenagers—recite poems, focus the light on them instead.]

Act I (Scene IV):

[This is the Poetry Café scene where the EDGY TEENAGERS read their poems.]

[POET 1 Recites Poem I.]

[POET 2 Recites Poem II.]

[Continue this process until all poems are read.]

EMMA: (To Jeremy.) Did you get anything from any of those?

JEREMY: Not really, they all still sound like gibberish to me. Also, didn’t you come here to read a poem?

EMMA: I did come here to recite a poem, but Daniel isn't here anymore. Without him here, I can't read the poem. I made an exception for you, though.

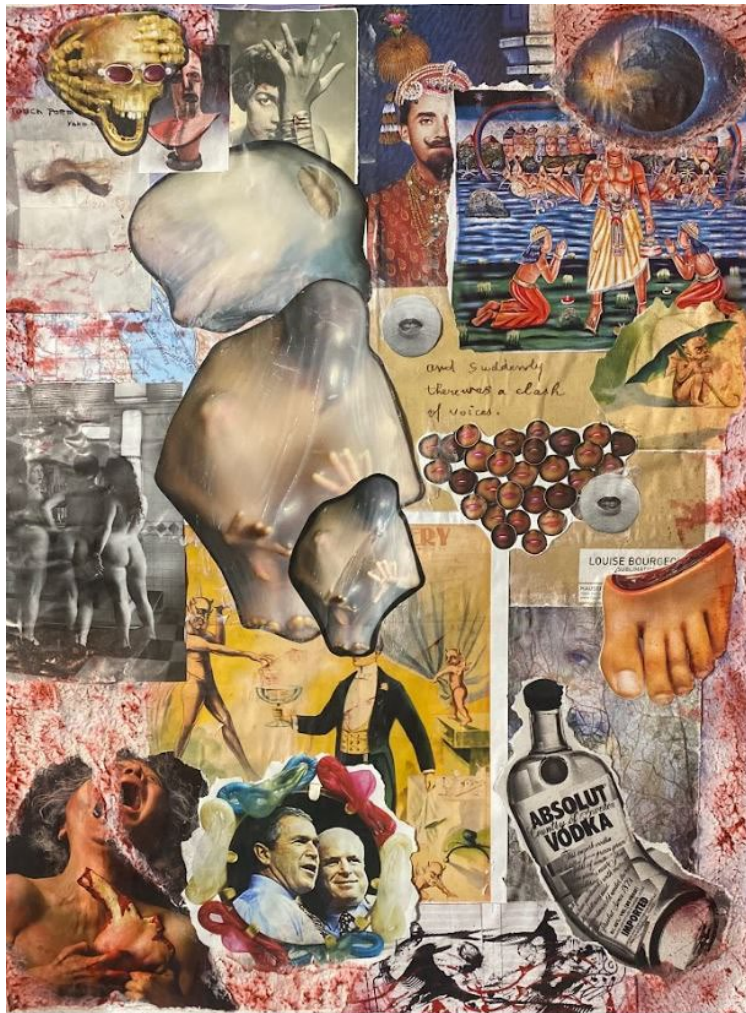
JEREMY: I'm not sure Daniel would appreciate that.

EMMA: We'll just have to wait and see.

Lucid Dreams

Sara Dugain

2nd Place Drawing



“Cadavers or Cuffs”

Gryphon Roberts

1st Place Music Lyrics

They say we can't beat this Goliath,

But David had God, and he triumphed,

I won't lose to a giant.

That's why I stay loud and defiant,

Why my way is proud, like a lion.

It's why you can't miss me in a crowd when I'm tryin'

To stay low,

Take it slow,

To beat the rain.

I don't think I'll be able, but I'm certainly Cain.

•

Rain came down and it started to pour,

But nobody got an umbrella for the poor.

Each and every one we got, riddled with holes,

Another brother shot, got riddled with holes.

•

So I got my umbrella, but it's hella torn up,

Used by light skinned fellas born hella high up.

I ain't the belle of the ball, but I fought for this all.

I ain't got no inheritance, they ask me for the relevance; the arrogance and decadence is why they're gonna fall.

•

Umbrellas like mine can't stop the rain,

And if I go too high, then so too does the pain.

And right now, I feel proud, standing tall,

But I look down, through the cloud, I see the fall.

Then I realize I just might lose it all,

So I guess I best bounce back; top of the wall;

Keep climbing,

Oliver Twist always asked for more,

Keep whining.

Won't reach the top no matter how far I soar,

My legs are sore,

Almost like we've done this before,

And we survived it before.

That's why survival stays in my core.

•

They say they never got enough for us,

Said it ain't about skin or our kin, but the noose tied to the brim.

They say they never got room to adjust,

But we're still struggling, suffering; That's why we make such a fuss.

•

It's tragic, the state the world is living in,
The magic is faded, deflated, replaced with living sin.
The story will surely end like that of Macbeth,
How suddenly, the tragedy is all that is left.

•

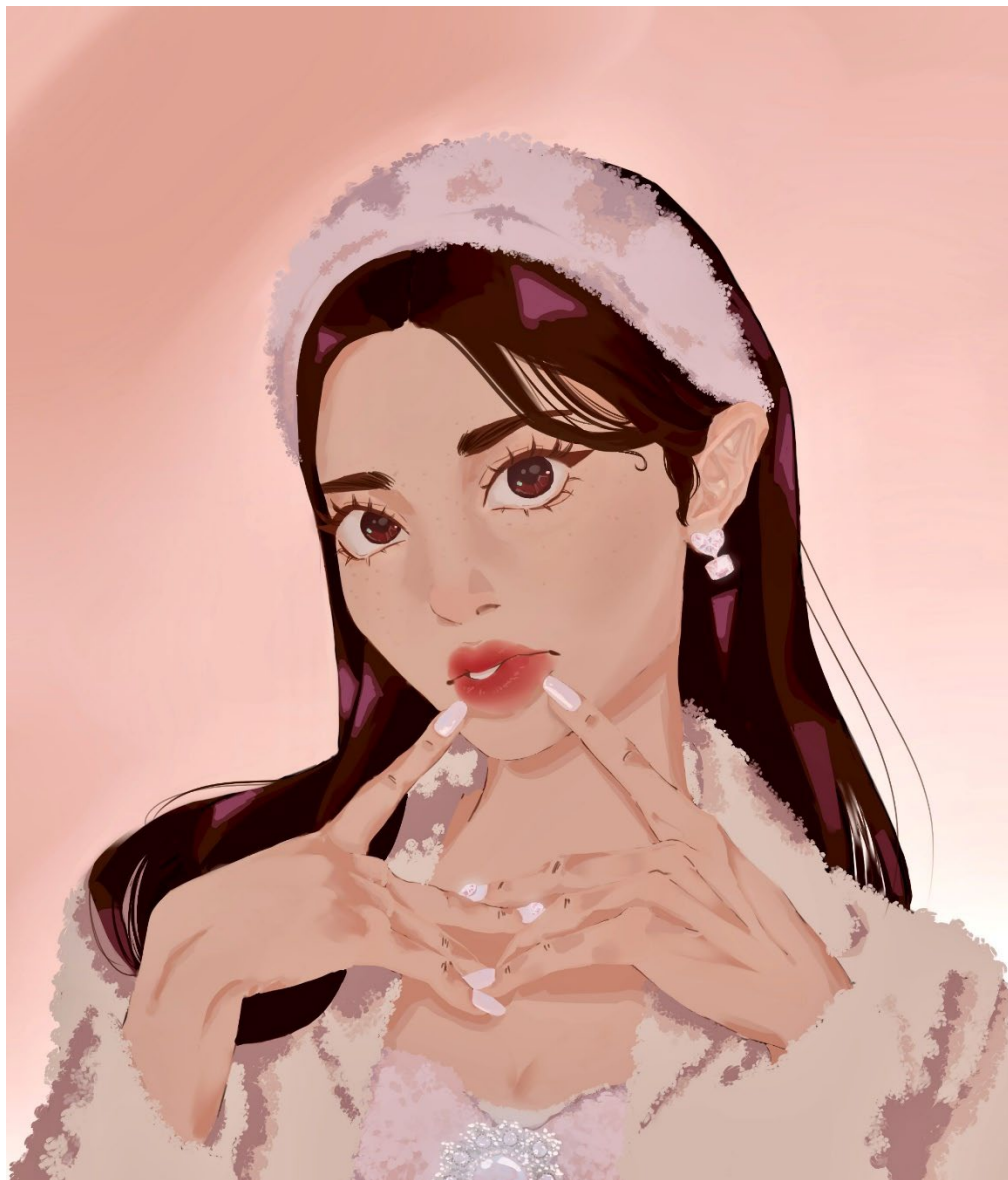
Is all of this really my fight?
Two wrongs don't make it alright,
But they're just my type,
So I just might bite.
People think I'm such a sight,
But it's just my height,
Gotta trust my hype.
Give up the ghost; take flight,
So the world can shine its light.

•

But it's never gonna be enough.
Keep the peace of the fight, it's always gonna be tough.
It's hard for diamonds in the rough,

All bark, 'till we bite and we fight, and we leave in cadavers or in cuffs.

Darlin'
Adrienne Scott
3rd Place Digital Art



“Visiting Hours”

Dominic Julian

3rd Place Short Story

An unknown older man once said, “Life can change in an instant. Don’t take anything or anyone for granted today.” No sooner would those words come to resonate with the boy, than when they left the man’s lips. On a journey through Japan with his friend, Damien, he was knowing, but ignorant of this lesson. It was only in the moment Damien vanished, that he learned the value of life and time spent with the ones he loves.

It happened in the Abuta District, Hokkaido, Japan in the year 2018. Damien and the boy were touring Japan on their senior trip, they were preparing to venture up Mt. Yotei one more time before departing from Japan to go home. They had been on this hike, three days in a row already in fact, and every time they went, it became more and more apparent that it was undoubtedly the most stunning place they had seen. There was a cliff about three-fourths of the way up with the most magnificent view overlooking the Abuta District that Damien wanted to go to see one more time, he naturally obliged.

About halfway up the mountainside, it was very evident that this was an awkward trek up to our viewpoint, as there was no normal banter or jokes, only the songbirds around us and the ever-growing silence between them. As he was processing what to say to break the silence, it was Damien who beat me to it. Damien began to talk to the boy in what once was a peppy tone, but now he understood it to be a solemn tone; Damien telling the boy how grateful he was to have a friend, a brother such as him. It was odd, as Damien was never the one to outwardly express his emotions, the boy pushed it to the side, but made note of it.

They eventually reached the cliff about thirty minutes later, sitting down in their normal spots, right along the edge with their legs dangling off the side. They began to joke like usual, becoming reassured that everything was okay and that the boy was just

overthinking what he previously said. Damien eventually spoke again, this time with a happy loneliness in his voice; Damien began to spew about how he had been holding so much anger, anguish, and sadness since our graduation. Damien then told the boy that his mother told him about his father, and the actual reason for his absence in his life.

As it turns out, his father didn't just up and leave, as if he didn't care like Damien was led to believe. His father was actually a Staff Sergeant in the Army, who was killed in action by an IED while on tour in Afghanistan. Damien explained to the boy in great detail, now with tears in his eyes, how much anger he had with his father, when his mother first time told him he didn't believe her. It wasn't until his mother started to cry that Damien realized it was true, soon after his anger for his father was directed towards his mother; Damien explained he hadn't been home since that night, bouncing around from place to place. Damien explained how the pain and anguish he felt towards his mother and father caused him to change, turning into an extreme extrovert, trying a number of things, from different sports to drugs to relieve the storm within his head. The boy was taken aback by the weight of what Damien just told me, amazed that he was never aware of these changes within the very person he called his brother.

Damien then turned to the boy, locking eyes with him, telling him there was only one thing left that he hadn't tried yet; he told the boy once again to never stop being the loving, caring, sensitive guy he was. Telling the boy that he could always grow up and learn to stop being so selfish and be appreciative of what he has in front of him, and that he never knows when it could disappear. Soon after, Damien told the boy he loved me and that he will always be his brother; the next moment, before the boy could react, Damien was falling; no, floating, down to the forest floor forty feet below. The boy fell onto his back, first nothing except silence, his screams of anguish filled the mountainside soon after.

Everything was a blur after that, even now, sitting in his chair the boy can only recall some of the things that took place after. He vaguely remembers the investigation that took place to find out whether it could have been foul play. He remembers Ms. Vaughn (Damien's Mother) fiercely defended me, the boy assumed to protect him from any accusation being made against him. The boy vividly remembers the teary-eyed, thick with somber funeral, the eulogy he was to be a part of. He spoke in an almost robotic voice of how much of a friend Damien was, how what he and the boy were able to forge must be what twins are born with, that innate ability of being able to understand the other one so clearly. The boy remembers holding Autumn, Damien's baby sister, as she pointed towards Damien's coffin as he was being lowered into his final resting place, the only place the boy would ever be able to see him again.

Today, the boy is able to speak about the situation more freely, of course he still does get stuffy about it at times, but nothing like he used to be. Still, there are times he wishes he didn't take Damien's company for granted, at times he wishes he could just tell Damien how much he meant to the boy. How much Damien still means to him, maybe one day though the boy will be able to tell him all the funny stories of how his life changed, hell, maybe Damien's already watching over the boy's story of life. Jeez I miss that kid; the afterlife should have visiting hours.

Ethereal Darkness

Amber McCallister

1st Place Drawing



Inked Cloth

Harlequin Young

3rd Place Drawing



“NANA”

Jaylin Jones
1st Place Poetry

Our days have not been easy
We have not been our best
But having you inside us all just simply means were blessed

Losing you has broken us
We can't seem to find strength
But a small amount of peace is felt in knowing where you went
For that reason, we will try to be strong

Because being absent from here means you've only went home

We won't dwell on sad thoughts

Only sweet happy wishes and wait for our sweet nana

To send us some butterfly kisses

Imaginary World

Kiki Kelley

2nd Place Digital Art



Spring is in the Air

Nadiya Filimonova

2nd Place Painting



“Seasons Come and Go”

Dominika Sapien

1st Place Short Story

Micah

I sigh as I lean back further and further into my chair. Same old days at school; it never seems to end. It's like a timeless trap

That I'm wasting my time in. Even though it's such a "prestigious" school (aka BORING) that my parents made a huge deal when

I got in, I would much rather go somewhere that has an adventure. The professor - Professor Eli? - keeps droning on about something I couldn't care less about - the stars, maybe? I glance outside the window, the sky a hazy gray, and the sun hiding away, only seemingly to give little warmth to the Earth. The trees' leaves are a different palette of colors, ranging from a drastic, vibrant red to a light yellow like on a baby chick. The air is cold and fresh in a way that when you breathe, it feels clear and a new start. This makes me think of Hazel. Around this time last year, I would be with Hazel, driving somewhere away from despair and somewhere to hope and possibility. She's been my best friend since we were born. Living by each other made it even easier to keep growing our relationship between us. Ever since the pact we made when we were 8, we vowed to never let each other go, and to always say the truth, even when it gets hard. I remember when we both found out we had both gotten accepted to the same college, how excited we had been. She had applied to the same college that my parents wanted me to apply to, against her parents' knowledge and wishes. That was part of The Big Fight she had between her parents that she couldn't wait to leave and start a new beginning. New beginnings — that was something she always talked about,

thought about, and I joked with her she probably even dreamed about it.

"Micah, are you with us?"

I wish I could go back again and relive those moments, and maybe we could mean something significant to the world. What if we-

"*MICAH!*" The voice booming in my ear.

I snap out of my reverie of the past and look up to see Professor Eli's expression, which makes me realize she probably asked a question. I don't know what to say, keeping a dumbfounded look on my face.

"I'm glad to see you joined us back," Professor Eli states plainly, as some of the class bursts out into ravenous laughter. "Next time, pay attention."

"Yes, Professor Eli," I mumble, a bit embarrassed by the laughter.

"Yeah Micah, maybe that's why you have trouble with your homework!" Patrick yells from the side of the class.

This time, the whole class bursts out laughing. I shoot him a withering glare, my face turning red as he grins at me from the other side of the classroom.

"Patrick! Enough!" Professor Eli scolds him.

I guess you could say Patrick and I are sort of popular. Actually, Patrick is popular. It was the combined effect of us always hanging out together, and as Patrick liked to say which I strongly disagree with, my charming appearance. I met Patrick in one of my classes and we kind of clicked immediately. Through him, I got introduced to many people, but he always liked to stick with me the best. Usually, that feeling was mutual, unless he pulled idiotic stunts like this one. Professor Eli sighs as the laughter dies down and begins to speak.

"Class will end a little early today," this is interrupted by a cheer from the classroom, Patrick especially the loudest.

"If I am able to finish, don't forget your homework and projects will be due in about a week." This is met with a collective groan. See, I'm not the only one that thinks school can be a waste of time. I could be doing so many other things, like curing cancer.

Students around us start packing up, the room full of sounds of zipping and shuffling papers. Patrick meets me by the door, and we walk out together. We walk out into the courtyard of the school, and I sit down on a bench. Patrick stops by me and asks,

"You good?"

"Yeah," I answer him. "Go on ahead without me. I'm gonna sit here for a second."

"Alright," he tells me. "I'll catch up with you later, then."

He walks away, and with every step he takes, more people join him. The volume of the people just keeps getting louder and louder, that I can hear their mindless chatter all the way from here. Thank goodness I didn't follow him. It's refreshing to take a moment and not worry about other people, and keeping up in the fake conversation. I breathe the cool air, allowing the freshness to clear my mind for a second. Soon, it seems as if the campus is empty, as everyone would rather be anywhere but here. Honestly, I would rather be anywhere but here. But leaving this place is like leaving my sanity. Once I walk outside and Patrick invites me to whatever party, I'll have to fill my brain with useless and worthless information of- a flutter of movement out of the corner of my eye makes me look up. It's-

"Hazel?!" I exclaim. "What are you doing here?"

It's really unfortunate we don't have any classes together, but for some weird reason, I don't see her around at all. Even at the places I think we would see each other, we don't.

"Hey Micah," she grins my way.

"Where have you been? Why do you just show up right now, out of the blue?"

Pretending she didn't hear my questions, she says, "Oh, man, I love it when it gets colder."

My surprise was now giving away into anger and annoyance. How come she just shows up out of the blue now? After every call and text I tried to give her, and she never responded. Or how we haven't run into each other by now.

"Hazel!" I start, my voice annoyed. "Stop avoiding my questions. How do you expect me to react when you just disappear and don't even tell me anything? And now you've come back here, expecting me to-"

"Micah." She interrupts me. "Remember the pact we made when we were 8?" she pleads with me. "I'm sorry for just disappearing from you, but I can't really explain it to you. I've been just trying to protect you."

"Protect me from what?" I ask in bitter annoyance. "From not seeing you in a while? Or you just have no explanation for dipping on me?"

"Well, I-" she starts.

"Save it." I start to get up and walk away. "If you can't explain it to me, then don't expect me to be able to listen." I toss over my shoulder.

I walk out of the school towards the street, along the sidewalk. I give one last glance over my shoulder, and instead of her sitting there like I imagined, she's gone.

Insecurity

I'm a funny thing. I vary in people, and show up when least expected. Sometimes, I can't even be seen, but unbeknownst to

most, I'm always there. In the light, I'm a shadow. In the dark, someone is engulfed in my sorrow. Even on those days where nothing seems to go wrong, I sit and wait, waiting for the right moment to strike.

Micah

I honestly don't know which way I'm walking. All this Hazel stuff, and her appearing now just makes no sense. It makes me feel angry, but at the same time betrayed. Our fights never used to be this bad, and the worst one we had was just about last year. Suddenly, I'm in that moment again.

"Come on Micah! Let me do what I want. You don't always have to be around me all the time, it's so annoying!"

"I'm just trying to protect you. You never know what can happen." I yell and pace around her room.

"Micah, please! I'm just going on a road trip to see my friends upstate. I'm sure I'll be fine. I'm going, and you're not gonna stop me." she says all hysterical.

"Fine." I say quietly. The venom in my words, if only I could have said it gentler.

"Fine!" she spits those words out. "Don't call or text even, okay? Just leave, and finally you'll be good at something in your life."

And so I left.

I didn't realize I had zoned out on the edge of a street. As my eyes start to focus, this group of guys starts to make their way up to me.

"Oh, no.." I mutter underneath my breath. This can't be good.

"Hey buddy, you look lost!" one of them mocks me. He has a giant tattoo on the half of his face. I can't even tell where it ends or where it starts.

"No thanks, I'm actually good," I say, trying to push past them and away.

"Hey, hey, hey," some other one with a low gravelly voice says. "There's no need to be in a rush. Especially with you looking like that. Got a hot date?"

The rest of the gang bursts into laughter. This whole situation is so annoying, but I can't help feeling that they are right. My mind races in circles, wondering if that's maybe part of the reason Hazel always wanted to leave me behind.

"Especially cause he looks so broke!" one of them hoots out.

"Why isn't he saying anything?" one sneers in my face.

And suddenly these purple creatures of some sort just appear in front of me. My jaw drops. Replacing the group of thugs a couple of seconds ago is some sort of alien like creatures. Two of them, to be exact. This creature is extremely tall and towers above me. I take note of its gleaming sharp teeth, its purple muscular body, and its large, large eyes, that are a pure white. The other is exactly the same, except for having a green hue to its body. I start to back away slowly, and its eyes narrow like it knows what I am about to do. It screeches an unearthly sound, making my ears ring and my body shake. I turn around and try to run. The green one catches up to me and stands in my way. I am now trapped in between two alien creatures, with no way out.

"Where are you going?" the purple one asks grumbles out in a low bass voice. "We haven't properly introduced ourselves yet."

I stare, speechless. They can talk? And how come no one seems to be aware of this? I try to dig discreetly in my pocket for some sort of thing that maybe I can defend myself with. Meanwhile I'm doing this, I talk.

Connection

Angela Areu
1st Place Digital Art
Cover Art



"I don't know who or what you are or what you want from me."

"Of course you should know who we are or what we want from you." The green one chimes in. "We have always been with you."

"I really don't." All I find in my pocket is a piece of gum, some cents, and a pair of earbuds.

"Of course you do." The purple one says. "We are species insecurity. I go by Appearance. That one's name is Money. We know you, and of course, are a part of you." As Appearance says this, it jerks its head towards the green creature.

"How? I am no monster." I say with a sense of urgency. Am I trying to convince myself more than them?

"Are you sure about that?" One of them says. I am not sure which one because I am soon filled with an ocean of doubt. Am I? Then this makes me think of Hazel. How she would always reassure me.

It's like Hazel is right there with me. I can hear her voice in my ear.

"Why are you listening to those buffoons? I told you, I'm always right!"

The picture of her grinning ear to ear after she said this is fresh in my mind. I snap back to the present.

"Yes. I am." I say coldly. "I am no monster, like you." I pull out the earbuds; hopefully this is the best choice to fight them with.

"Hah!" They both guffaw loudly. "You're gonna defeat us with-" They cut off their sentence suddenly. These earbuds that I had been holding somehow turned into a sword that is an ice blue. A tag hangs off the handle, reading, "Friendship + Confidence." The atmosphere turns into a stench of fear. They are afraid of this

sword. I realize that the things they say are just to make me feel insignificant, and to buy into their lies. Well, I am not going to. I thrust the sword towards Appearance and then slice it to the right towards Money. A force of a bright blue fire ejects out of the sword, hitting both square in their alien chests. They disintegrate into the ground until I cannot see them anymore. I drop the sword and fall onto my knees in pain. My body aches like I ran a marathon. As the magnificent sword of Friendship and Confidence drops, it turns back into my regular earbuds. The last thing I remember before I black out is stumbling over to a shelter of trees and dropping by the nearest one in pain.

Sadness

I am an ocean. The sky is dark gray, almost black. The waves start their journey towards the shore. In the midst, they get lost, crushing into each other and becoming one. The atmosphere is heavy and moist, and the waves slap against each other, making a louder sound than before. Those that are lucky to reach the shore stop short to realize there is no real prize. Only being smacked into the sand with reality lies at the end. But it is too late to turn around. They have already committed. Soon the cycle starts all over again, being pulled back into crashing, not knowing which way you are going or which way you will end up. I always used to wonder why my ocean, my precious ocean, had to look this way. Others would glance and admire the beauty of it. Exclaim how the light blue ocean looked so beautiful in the calm moment of the clear sky. I would look with confusion and state,

"But it isn't light blue! It's a dark blue, with a stormy sky and the winds howling past my ears with no clear beginning and no clear ending."

I would be met with gazes of confusion. And that's when I realized I was the only one who saw it this way. I always look in envy of the others, able to see beauty and happiness, meanwhile I

can only see endless waves of pain. Underneath me all, if people are able to commit themselves that deep - although I dearly do not recommend because many succumb to the darkness and do not return - is the very bane of my existence. (The very bane of my existence??)

Micah

It's dawn. I've been knocked out for at least a couple of hours. At least, that's what I think.

"Ouch," I groan in pain as I roll over to my side and sit up.

It seems like I have everything that I had before.

Backpack, check.

My brain and skull, check.

I have my phone; at least I think I do. I reach down towards my other pocket, and my heart drops out of my chest. My earbuds are gone. This is terrible! How will I fight them if they come back again? If I had them in my pocket, how come they are gone now? There's no way those creatures stole them because I defeated them. So then who took my earbuds?

There's no need to ponder this because there is no obvious answer in sight. I get up and gather the things I have left. I don't know where to go. I can't remember what I was trying to do the day prior. As I set my backpack on my back, I gaze upon my surroundings. It seems as if I am now in the middle of the forest, not the edge. How come I didn't notice this before? I check what's left of my phone which the screen has been shattered immensely, and I have no signal. I start in one direction, not sure if it's the right way or not. I guess I will see.

Guilt

No matter what someone does, they'll always end up feeling bad. When I was younger, no one wanted to play with me. They complained I was too heartbreaking, or I was too sad. I was the cause of everything. It was like I was the reason for every issue, at least, that's what I was told. I was sorry for what I did, but no one ever specified what I had done wrong. In the root of every emotion, I hide behind them, no one truly knowing I'm there. It's been a lonely life, since I'm forgotten. There's something that we are all always good at. For me, I'm always good at being forgotten. If not forgotten, a lot try to pretend I was never there in the first place. But they cannot run. Everything always comes back to haunt you, at the darkest hours of the night. And that's when I arise; many are not ready to handle the truth that they so desperately tried to forget.

Micah

I think I passed that tree 10 minutes ago. Every step I take or whichever direction I go, the forest seems to get tighter. The funny thing - well, not so funny - is that the forest never seems to end. It soon gets darker than it was a minute ago. As I glance down, my very body is emitting a glowing, soft golden hue.

"What is happening?" I cry out. I know it's impossible. How is someone going to hear me out in the middle of nowhere?

It gets darker and darker until the only thing I can see, barely, is myself. I wonder what is happening, because I start to feel uneasy and fearful. I back away, unsure where I am going. My footing is uneven, and I trip against something I cannot see.

"Hello there," a sinister voice breathes in my direction. I don't know who it is or even *what* it is.

"Who are you?" I yell out. "What do you want?"

"I know who you are," the voice answers, ignoring my questions. "I am very close to you. I could sense your fear, so I decided to make an introduction to you."

"That's one hell of an introduction," I spit out with contempt.

I am on the ground, unsure of what to do. I'm making a show to seem brave, but inside, everything is crashing.

The voice chuckles. "What a brave front you're trying to put on."

What the f-? How does it know?

"Like I said, I am you."

"No, you're not," I retort. "I am **not** a monster. Why don't you show yourself?"

"I am," it responds. "This is me. I am in darkness." The voice pauses for a second. "Like I said, I am a part of you. Are you sure you're not?" tilting its head. The creature shows itself right in front of me. It is a never ending jumble of darkness. I do not know where it ends or where it starts. The only defining part is its head. It looks like a circular figure, with empty, dark, and very bleak eyes. It seems so... depressing. My initial reaction to this creature is to throw my fists towards it. As I do that, it makes a clucking noise, like it knows what I was about to do.

"Shame." it croaks out. "You don't hit your friends."

"I don't think you're getting the point," I angrily respond. "We are not friends. I do not know you. We are **not** the same."

And then the flashbacks start.

"You say we're not the same. But don't you think you're responsible for your friend's death?"

I remember.

This cannot be right.

She came back from her trip, so happy. We went to go get food together, like we always used to. She was driving on an unfamiliar road because I told her this would be faster. We would get there faster and have more time to spend together. And then there was the bridge. It was still moist from all the rain we had the days prior. She drove across the bridge, us both thinking that nothing else was going to happen except making it to the other side. Her wheel spun out, and we crashed into the bridge pole, the car flipping over. I remember her screaming, the stench of blood in the air, and my vision blurring. Her screaming was so fragile and sudden, like the glass shattering around us. Never ending pellets of glass shards. It was my fault. If I didn't tell her to take that road, none of this would have happened. And then suddenly her screaming stopped. She was on this Earth, and just gone in an instant. I was crying out her name. I wanted her to respond so badly. But what made Hazel Hazel was gone. And it was my fault. The glass fragments jarred in her body, pooling with blood. Three thousand miles away somewhere else, someone could have the best day of their lives, and here I was, having the most heartbreaking day of my life.

I cry out in pain. "It's my fault," I bawl out. I gasp for air. "It's my fault," each word slicing through me.

"I am Sadness." The creature answering my question now. "Although my true self for you is Guilt."

I continue weeping. I do not know what to say. I don't deserve to be here. Hazel should be here instead.

"I can offer you a deal." Sadness/Guilt says. "You are able to take this key and return to the past if you decide to. What you do is up to you, but you cannot tell her in any way, shape, or form of what her fate would be if you don't decide to change it."

A second chance? My heart feels like it's going to burst. "I get to see Hazel again!?" I desperately ask.

"Yes. As long as you follow the rules."

"I will do it." I answer right away. Anything to see Hazel again. And prevent her fate from happening.

I feel dizzy. The room gets brighter and brighter, swirling into a mass of light right before my eyes.

I guess light really does always triumph over darkness.

Hazel

The sky is a hazy gray, and the sun is hiding away, only seemingly to give little warmth to the Earth. The trees' leaves are a different palette of colors, ranging from a drastic, vibrant red to a light yellow like on a baby chick. The air is cold and fresh in a way that when you breathe; it feels like a clear and new start.

"Hazel!" Micah calls to me, grinning. "Are you thinking too hard that your face is changing seasons?"

"Ha, ha." I respond sarcastically. "Have you ever done any thinking before? I'm sure you'd benefit from it."

"Ouch, real harsh." He pretends to wince like it physically hurt him.

I turn back to looking outside the window, tuning out the words of Professor Eli's lecture.

Micah, my best friend, and I got into the college we wanted to get into together. A new start for both of us. I do not think fate or destiny determines what will happen in our life, but what I do know is this. Seasons will always come and go, and we can decide where we will go next. Just because I'm "destined" for one thing doesn't mean it will happen. I think back to our past. Our pact. Growing up together. The endless adventures we had in our town. Every little decision has led here, to now. We are able to decide what will happen next. I don't know what is in store for us, but we

are ready to bring our own storm into the world. Let us go to where no one has gone before.

With Micah at my side, everything from here looks full of radiance and possibility.

Tree

Kiki Kelley

1st Place Metalwork



Urchin (3 Views)

Amber McCallister

2nd Place Sculpture



“Coming Through”

Nina Stinehour

2nd Place Short Story

“Through,” Ms. Lam said to the class, “Th-roo.”

I stared at the blank paper placed in front of me, hoping I could somehow burn a hole through it using my willpower.

“Second time. Through. Th-roo-oo,” she announced.

I stared at the paper for what felt like an eternity. Everyone besides me started scribbling onto his or her paper, and the classroom was filled with a constant thudding as pencils hit the wooden desks through the thin papers. I held my yellow wooden 2B pencil in my hand, but my wrist was too weak to put anything onto the paper.

“Last time, listen up! Th-roo. Now moving on to the next word,” Ms. Lam declared.

Adrenaline rushed to my gut, and I forced myself to make sense of what sounded like gibberish to me. I knew I had failed the assignment from then. The only thing I could think of was how my mother would scold me when I went home with a big, fat zero on my paper. That was the end of the first word of my first-ever English spelling test, but also the beginning of a realization that I carry to this day.

I didn't grow up in an English-speaking country. My mother, sister, and I moved to Vancouver, Canada, from Kunming, China, when I was eight years old, just starting third grade. Back in China, I had always been a good student; I memorized poems, knew famous poets, performed mental math, and wrote most Chinese characters correctly. Even when we moved to a new country, I maintained the same expectation for myself, blissfully unaware of what was ahead in the next divergence of my journey.

The first week of being in a foreign country was somewhat enjoyable. I liked seeing people with unfamiliar blonde hair and dark skin, buildings covered by colorful English posters, and evergreens tall enough to poke holes into the light blue sky. Despite the scenic views, I was not comfortable surrounded by a language that I didn't comprehend. I didn't understand most questions that others asked me, and the embarrassment made me

reluctant to talk to anyone besides my family. I was afraid of any English communication, not to mention schoolwork that put a grade on my poor English skills.

On the second Monday of the school year, Ms. Lam - a short Vietnamese lady with long, black, and glossy hair - handed me a blank piece of paper and wanted me to spell out whatever word she would say to the class. *Okay*, I thought to myself, *I know how to do this. I did well in English class back in China.*

“Okay, class. Listen carefully for the words and then write them down,” Ms. Lam said to the class after clearing her throat.

I followed her instructions. Before she announced the first word, I tuned all my attention to her and anticipated something that I could finally do well on.

“Through,” the teacher articulated to the class, “Th-roo.”

I was dumbfounded. That word did not live in my vocabulary bank, nor was I even faintly aware of its existence. But there it was, proudly echoing through the tiny classroom and mocking my ignorance. Feelings of bitterness and sourness formed a huge, tight lump in my throat. I was defeated by something that no one had ever taught me.

Still, I gathered up the remaining strength I had and did what I could. I combined my knowledge of Chinese and English and created an entirely new method of spelling.

“Through,” said Ms. Lam.

I gave my best attempt and wrote ‘zhru’ on my paper.

“Skin,” Ms. Lam announced the next word.

I put ‘zhking’ on my paper.

“Nose,” pronounced the teacher.

I carelessly scribbled ‘nous’ onto the third blank.

The process repeated for several minutes, or perhaps several hours. I couldn’t tell.

“Last one, house. Hh-au-ss. Now, pass your paper to the front,” she told the class.

I was ecstatic. It was the only word out of the entire spelling test that I knew. I slowly and deliberately wrote the word ‘House’ onto my final blank and triple-checked the letters to make sure each one of them was full, vibrant, and perfectly visible. ‘House’ was the only legible word on my answer sheet; others were sloppy clusters of letters that looked more like doodles of a heart rate diagram than actual words.

I went home that afternoon with a bright red 1/15 marked on my paper. My apartment was only fifteen minutes away from school, yet I took about half an hour strolling around other areas before heading back home. I had hoped Mom was away shopping, but I heard the humming of the kitchen ventilator before opening the door. I took a deep breath and peeked inside. The ancient wooden door that needed to be oiled months ago squeaked loudly and announced my arrival.

“What are you doing? Come help set the table up,” Mom said as she peered over the wall. “We’ll start dinner when your sister comes back.”

“Okay...” I mumbled. But I didn’t move a muscle. Instead, I glared at the worn-out mud-yellow carpet as if a goblin had suddenly sprung out of it. My heart started pounding like a war drum, and my eyes were watering up.

“What’s wrong?” Mom asked when she hadn’t heard me coming.

She came around the wall and found me standing still like a tree actor in a school play. I silently handed her the slightly moist and wrinkled paper.

“Hold on,” Mom said as she wiped her hands on the orange and black striped towel before taking the paper from me. She read through it, placed it onto a clean corner of the kitchen counter, and then pulled me into her arms for a hug.

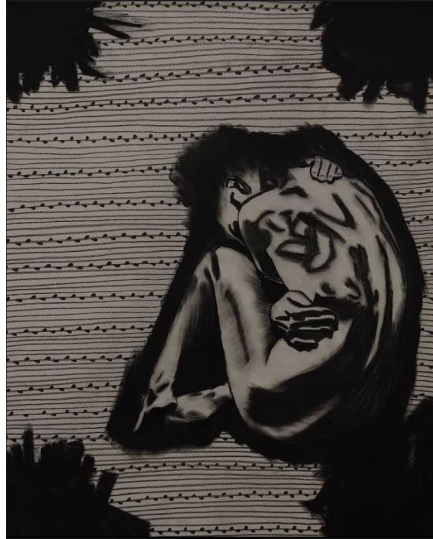
“I didn’t do well,” I confessed earnestly. “I didn’t understand most of the words, and I got them all wrong.” I was sure she heard the dryness in my cracked voice.

All she did was hug me tighter.

“No, honey. You did well. You did what you could, and that’s all that matters. I’m proud of you,” Mom told me as she kissed me on my forehead.

It was then when I realized what I thought was a humiliating experience was not a definitive statement on who I am as a person. Rather than shaming myself for not performing to a high standard, I should keep driving forward because I knew my mother always had my back. My mom, a short lady with dark, wavy hair and a bright smile, gave me immeasurable strength through my journeys. She was the boat that protected me from drowning in a foreign country, in a foreign language. She was, and still is, my beacon of light who guided me to sail safely over the tremendous and fearsome waters.

Hold Me
Valerie Rivera
Honorable Mention Drawing



Brendon Urie
Valerie Rivera
Honorable Mention Painting



Byways: Journal of Arts and Literature is a student publication featuring original creative written work: short fiction, poetry, song writing, non-fiction and drama. It also includes original art work: paintings, sculptures, photography, music score, music lyrics, short plays, and metal works.

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