

BYWAYS
JOURNAL OF ARTS AND LETTERS
SPRING 2024

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LETTERS
Spring 2024

Cover Art

Secrets of the Sacred Feminine

By Nadiya Filimonova

2025 Poster Art

Jellyfish Tea

By Zakevia Brown

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 mixed media art, digital art, drawings, metalwork, musical scores, musical lyrics, paintings, photography, playwriting, poetry, sculpture, and short stories. 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.

Hobby Memorial Library gives their sincere appreciation to Professor of English, Mike Matthews, for his continued support.

Byways Editorial Staff

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***Magic of Nature* by Gabrielle Mare**
3rd Place Digital Art



***Snow* by Maela Gonzales**
3rd Place Photography



“December” by Mary Caitlynn V Ryals

3rd Place Music Lyrics

Verse 1:

A gilded room with only you and me.
I stare at my phone wondering when to leave.
Rain starts to fall, is this the end of it all?
I thought you'd be all I need.
Was it all cause' of me?

Chorus:

When you said you'd stay I thought you meant it.
When you hear my name do you remember everything?
I gave you my all in December,
Then you were gone by September
Boy, I dunno how to feel, when you tell me it all wasn't real
The cold kept me safe and now it's so warm.
Tell me, was she the better deal?

Verse 2:

Was I not enough for you to stay?
The lies you tell are just to gray
I was frost bit by the end of it all, slippin' on the ice,
We watched the snow fall but I now I just can't recall
If you ever even cared, what was everything we shared?

Chorus:

When you said you'd stay thought you meant it.
When you hear my name do you remember?
I gave you my all in December,
Then you were gone by September
Boy, I dunno how to feel, when you tell me it all wasn't real
The cold kept me safe and now it's so warm.
Was she the better deal?

Bridge:

This isn't what I wanted, none of it was what I planned
You took all my love and locked it away, it slipped through my hands like sand.
You think you all that and a bag of chips, but boy you didn't even have dip.
I know I was enough for you, even if you didn't see it.
Why'd you lead me along while you had other girls on call?
As the seasons change, I think it's time to move on
The snow melts around me and summer is here upon me
I gotta new boy in the driveway he's nothin' like you
You were a memory I no longer want.
Oh, with the other girls did you act so nonchalant?

Chorus:

When you said you'd stay thought you meant it.
When you hear my name do you remember?
I gave you my all in December,
Then you were gone by September
Boy, I dunno how to feel, when you tell me it all wasn't real
The cold kept me safe and now it's so warm.
Was she the better deal?

Outro:

I know we both tried to keep it adrift.
And to be honest I'm grateful you left.
My heart has melted for something new.
And baby he's a whole lot better than you.
In August he'd told me he'd stay by July I had forgotten your name
When December comes, I'm no longer frozen
I'm always warm with my perfect flame.

“Gummy Bear” by Abigail Hedge

3rd Place Poetry

I can be red
You can eat me in bed.
I can be blue
You can put me in your shoe.
I can be green
Just don't make a scene.
I can be yellow
And make you mellow.
I can be white
But it may cause a fight,
Over my flavor
So do me a favor.
Just one small thing
Then bells will ring.
Name what I am.
I don't come from a can.
And make sure you share,
Because I'm a Gummy Bear!

“Honey & Wine” by Mary Caitlynne V Ryals

2nd Place – Music Lyrics

Verse 1:

Love as sweet as honey and wine.
Oh, when do I get to call you mine?
Your daddy says I'm nothing but trouble.
But oh, baby girl, do you think I fit in that bubble?
We sneak out past midnight, were on cloud nine.

Chorus:

Oh, my love as sweet as honey and wine.
Oh, when do I get to call you mine?
You build something in me like raging fire.
Oh, my sweet desire, what would folks say if they learned?
As fragile as a flower. As cruel as time.
Our stories forever intertwined in the back of your mind.

Verse 2:

I know you're scared I see it on your face.
So, I hold you tight and tell you I'll keep you safe
Now only God knows our fate.
In day light I admire from afar
At night I'll meet you at the back of the bar
Wondering when I'll call you mine, I think it's about time.

Chorus:

Oh, my love as sweet as honey and wine.
Oh, when do I get to call you mine?
You build something in me like raging fire.
Oh, my sweet desire, what would folks say if they learned?
As fragile as a flower. As cruel as time.
Our stories forever intertwined in the back of your mind.

Bridge:

Our ghost dances in the middle of the bar.
I hope we could only run so far,
As to never be found again, and I'll take paper to pen.
I'll write of us forever more my ghost longing to be with yours.
And I'll wait for one sweet kiss as the honey and wine run out

God, I can't wait to leave this town
They'll never know you like I do, so with my last breath I'll say to you

Chorus:

Oh, my love as sweet as honey and wine.
Oh, when do I get to call you mine?
You build something in me like raging fire.
Oh, my sweet desire, what would folks say if they learned?
As fragile as a flower. As cruel as time.
Our stories forever intertwined in the back of your mind.

Outro:

As they know my sins I wonder, would you cry sweet tears for me?
As they rip my soul from me will you promise to always be,
As sweet as honey and wine even if I can no longer call you mine?
My gentle girl please don't cry it was only a matter of time.
Before the storm would come and take me away.
My love as sweet as honey and wine I'll wait for you in the divine.



***La Catrina* by Elian Gomez**
3rd Place Drawing

Ducklings Café Visit by Madison Jones
1st Place Digital Art



Jellyfish Tea by **Zakevia Brown**
2nd Place Digital Art – 2025 Poster



“Open Roads” by Roman S. Gladue

1st Place – Music Lyrics

Baby there ain't nothing new that interests me more than you. I have been looking for a love like this for so long and now that I have it you got me writing a song. We cuddle each other clinging like morning dew and when I leave the house, I know you're coming too. Cause we got a bond that's stronger than anything a machine can do.

Cruising down them open roads. Just you, me, and the radio. Don't know where we're going, but we ain't going home. There is more of this world that we don't know, and it won't take that long if we start to explore. Cruising on them open roads, you, and me, we can't go wrong.

We meet lots of people, the good and the bad, but all of them are jealous of the love we have. They say our love is so bright it seems like the sun doesn't shine and I'd agree because you're so fine. The open roads are where we belong and that is why it got me writing this song.

Cruising down them open roads. Just you, me, and the radio. Don't know where we're going, but we ain't going home. There is more of this world that we don't know, and it won't take that long if we start to explore. Cruising on them open roads, you, and me, we can't go wrong.

Time has passed and we're old and gray, but we ain't gonna stop cruising today. I love you more than you'll ever know, and my only hope is that you love me so. Granted that's a given as you're here with me, and that little fact is plain to see. So no matter what happens or where we go, our home is with each other on them open roads, them open roads.

Charlie Cox by Valerie Rivera

Tied 2nd Place Painting



Blood Orange by Esteban Lopez-Flores
1st Place Drawing



“Grown” by Savannah Carrizales
2nd Place Poetry

When you look in her eyes you don't see her there.
She is completely gone she's out of sight.
And you wish you had Held on tight.

When she was young
She made you laugh and never cry.
But now that she's grown you have to say goodbye.

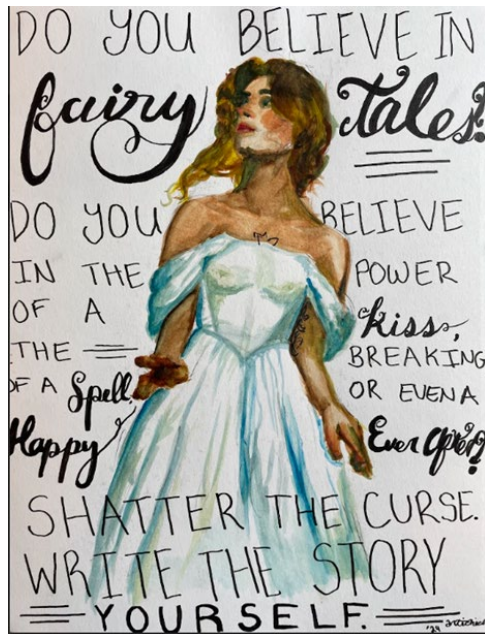
It's hard to see the woman that she has now become,
And you don't want to face that your part in her life is done.

So now sit and reminisce about the girl you once knew and be proud of the woman that
you now see.
Be proud of the way that she turned out to be.

I know it's hard to accept her new found life.
And you're dying inside when she doesn't call you back at night.

But you can't stay mad with her forever
You remember when she was the one who made
You feel better

You ignore the fact that your love to her has become a bit numb, but she reminds you
That you part in her life is never done.



Fairy Tales by Emma Gill
Tied 2nd Place Painting

Radiance by Esteban Lopez-Flores
2nd Place Drawing



“Homeless Mother” by Luigi Gonzalez Garcia

1st Place Poetry

She mourns for a house far away, the white walls standing firm
in old pictures, in dusky dreams, in pitiful soliloquies.
She laments to herself because no one has the patience to listen anymore
the obsessive details of her loss, the everlasting complaint.
“Where’re my garden and my guava tree?” she cries in the mornings
while drinking a third cup of coffee, fighting the urge to go back
to sleep, the need to dream with the neat tiled roof
that once covered her head from the lingering hurricane rain.
She mourns for a house far away, across a wide expanding gulf with
so much water, so much wind, so much pain.

She misses her country, the estranged siblings, the sorry streets
where she danced ancient rhythms calling for invisible, loud gods
always eager to party over human hosts.
She tells herself these things because it’s easier to conflate her cries
to the totality of the land and not her beloved house,
rightfully obtained and wrongfully lost.

“Where’re my garden and my guava tree?” she keeps repeating
while taking long careful sips from her chipped mug,
a sign that she holds things close even when hopelessly broken.
From the bottom of her heart, she yearns to cross the threshold
and to find it was all a tasteless prank, her son still playing
in the backyard, her husband still loving her bright, unbridled smile.
She mourns for a house far away, the big wooden door is a single
great eye observing her arrival even if it’s just another dream
ready to be murdered by hands that will never again turn the doorknob
and call what’s inside the white walls: home.

***Secrets of the Sacred Feminine* by Nadiya Filimonova**
1st Place Painting, Cover Art



“Bulaklak” by Mary Caitlynn V Ryals

2nd Place Short Stories

By 3:30 PM, the sun started to set, painting the skies with mixes of pinks, reds, and oranges. This view was best seen from the window in the 11D classroom of Saint Joseph's College. With it being the last period, the 11D class was loud. Their teacher sighed, rolling her eyes, wondering if she should intervene with the eleventh graders.

"Where do you think he's going?" A boy grinned, eyeing the subject in question. Another boy sits by himself next to the windows. He looks different from his classmates. With lighter skin and piercing green eyes, it was hard not to notice him. Four tables and chairs were pushed together, the group of students continuing to gossip.

"Who knows- it's not like he talks much anyway," a girl replied.

Another student shrugs, "All I can say is he's for sure not walking home; we're actually neighbors." The group continues to chat as the final period goes by. At the end, all students return their desks to normal, clean the classroom, and prepare to leave. Once all bags are packed, the students file out of the room.

Elijah Alon S. Cruz is the 11th-grade boy the group is following. Being the most mysterious and lone wolf of all the popular kids, it sets him apart. Elijah Cruz is known for his light skin and pale green eyes, something most kids in the Philippines lack. Being one of the only mixed kids at St. Joseph's made him well-known. He tends to stick by himself, not bothering to go out of his way to make new friends. He's on the basketball team as one of their star players, well-known for his quick wit and the scowl he carries everywhere. Depending on who you ask, he can be perceived as either rude or another cute foreigner boy.

Elijah walked quietly through the rain, the black umbrella being the only thing keeping him dry. The familiar chime of the bell while opening the flower shop's door gave him a small feeling of calm.

"Afternoon, Eli!" The florist smiled, already grabbing a bouquet of white gardenias.

Passing the bouquet off to the young boy, she smiled, "Tell my sister I said 'Hi.'"

"Mhmm," he hummed, not really paying attention to what she said. He got to see her today. That's all that mattered. Leaving the store, he propped up his black umbrella to fight off the rain. He walked in silence, no music or podcast, just the sound of the rain and busy street. She had always loved the rain. A ghost of a smile was on Elijah's face. He felt that excited knot in his stomach; he couldn't wait to tell this girl everything that happened in the week. It was quite exciting. Walking into the hospital, he nodded at the lady at the front desk, already knowing the routine they'd been doing for years. As his steps felt heavier and heavier, her door grew closer and closer. He loathed the

fluorescent lights and sterile decor, but he would rather die than not pay a visit to an old friend.

“Room 129” was written on the plaque.

Pausing at the door, he wondered if he was even doing the right thing. She was in here because of him after all. It was his fault; he had done nothing to fix it. Was he sick for even seeing her? Was he making it worse for her? If he was told to stop, would he? Would he be allowed to leave the one good thing he has left in his life? The one thing that refuses to drive him into a deeper pit of self-hatred. With shaky hands, he opens the door. The hospital room remained mainly white and sterile, with small knickknacks and decorative pieces here and there. All decor was ocean themed. A poster of different marine life hung on the wall, books of marine biology sitting atop a nightstand.

“Eli!” A young girl in a white gown sat atop a white bed. The window behind her slightly let the sound of rain into the room. Her black curls were braided into a side braid, pieces of her hair framing her tan face. Her gentle smile made his throat dry up. Elijah felt his pride and anger strip from his body, leaving behind the young boy that would play Tumbang Preso with the neighborhood kids. He rushed towards her, carefully placing the gardenias next to the old ones before engulfing the girl in a hug.

“Hi Chels,” he hugged tight, almost like he never wanted to let go.

Chelsea Victoria R. Villaflor is a 16-year-old girl who has been living in this small white room since the 9th year of high school. Elijah sat on the bed next to her, the two chatting back and forth about the events that had happened during the week. Chelsea smiled widely at the stories of his high school adventures. They mostly described his basketball games and whatever his friends dragged him to do.

“Hanahaki Disease” A rare chronic respiratory disease originating from Japan, causes flowers and other plant life in the lungs. This condition is characterized by the regurgitation of flower petals and plant matter, which obstruct the airways and lead to respiratory distress. The exact cause of Hanahaki Disease remains poorly understood. However, it is believed to be triggered by intense emotional distress, particularly romantic longing that is not reciprocated.

Unrequited love.

There is one cure which is rarely effective: surgically removing the plants from the patient's lungs, causing the patient to lose any romantic feelings they once had. Chelsea refused the surgery, however, as there is no guarantee that removing the flowers will prevent their regrowth, leading to the return of her feelings as well. She preferred to talk as little as possible about her prognosis, a slight look of annoyance on her face when asked the same questions about her diagnosis. “How do you feel?” “Who did you fall for?” “Do you still love him?” The moment flowers slowly crawled up her throat, those questions rushed through her mind. Her breaths came in shallow gasps, each one feeling like a struggle against the pressure in her chest. A metallic tang, sharp and

unmistakable, coated the back of Chelsea's throat. Panic electrified her body as her hands instinctively flew to her mouth. The feeling of soft petals reached the tips of her fingers. Her lungs coughed up yellow and orange chrysanthemums painted in thick red blood. Terror gripped her heart in fear as she stared at the mess of flowers, thick hot bile, and dripping red blood gracing the pristine white toilet in the 9th-grade bathroom.

In the present, Chelsea's long curls were being brushed as she hummed in delight, Elijah listening to her stories of what she had been getting into while he was away. It wasn't as exciting as his stories; there were no basketball practices or upcoming exams in the hospital where she lived. Just board game tournaments, movie nights, and the occasional visits from her family members. Elijah smiled softly as the girl in front of him rambled on and on about her week, her excitement forcing a chuckle from him. As he saw the two of them from the mirror, he wondered how long they'd been doing this routine. He had watched her grow older and older in that mirror, the same look of content on her face as he brushed the long curls. How much longer would she be here? In this tiny room with the same doctors and nurses, the same food to eat, the same routine to follow.

"Are you even listening?" Chelsea laughed slightly, leaning back into Eli, catching his wandering attention.

"Sorry, continue about your scheme to steal extra leche flan from the cafeteria," he grinned, rolling his eyes.

"It is not a scheme! It's a movement! A protest for good, if you will." He let out a laugh, feeling the tension from the week leaving his body, yet the guilt stayed. The banter continued, a heavy weight settling in the pit of Elijah's stomach. With each laugh that escaped Chelsea's lips, he felt the sharp sting of remorse gnawing at his conscience, the unspoken words lingering between them like a shadow cast by the harsh fluorescent lights of the hospital room. As Chelsea chattered on about their plans to liberate extra servings of leche flan from the cafeteria, Elijah forced a smile.

Small memories of their childhood fill his mind. Playing by the beach, building sandcastles that were always too close to the water's edge and getting soaked in the waves, their laughter echoing in the salty breeze. They were always an unlikely pair, Elijah with his brooding demeanor and Chelsea with her infectious energy, but somehow, they clicked, complementing each other in ways neither could fully understand. Despite the weight of Chelsea's illness and the guilt Elijah carried, their friendship remained a beacon of light in the darkness that surrounded them.

Eventually, the conversation turned to her health.

"I've been told of a new treatment" He begins placing the hairbrush down on the bed beside him. Elijah looks at Chelsea through the mirror in front of them. There's a nervous tension in the air as he brings it up. The girl takes a breath allowing him to continue.

Running his calloused hands through her hair he continues, "I... I know you think it isn't my fault that you're here. But it is-" The sickly girl cuts him off turning around to face him.

"You know that isn't true!"

"Chelsea," He begins again a slight tremble in his voice urges her to listen. "I cannot bear to see you in here for another day. I know you're sick of it too. You deserve the freedom every other stupid kid in my class has. Hell, you're more deserving of it." Elijah's hands rest on her shoulders. "There is a new treatment, it can get you out of here you can live your dreams just like we talked about. No more appointments, you'd be in school making friends and jump starting your career. There's finally hope, but..."

He faltered, his gaze dropping to the floor as he struggled to find the words. "But it would mean forgetting... forgetting me."

Chelsea practically jumps off the bed pushing herself out of his grasp. A confused look of shock painting across her face.

"No," She states firmly as if it was fact that she would never go through with it.

"Chelsea please," He begs. "I know this isn't ideal, the thought of me losing you kills me. Believe me it does but God Chels, I can't see you like this anymore. You deserve more than this, more than me."

She holds herself in her arms, tears well in her brown eyes as she refuses to let them fall. A frustration burning in her as she listens to the boy plead for every memory they've ever shared to be erased from her mind.

"I can't do it, I won't do it. I refuse to sacrifice everything I've had with you, everything I've built with you for the sake of a cure."

"Yet you should. I am not worth all this pain!" The boy pleads.

"You are! You are worth every agony, every tear shed, every gasping breath, and every cough wracking my body. If it means I get to love you...Elijah, every ounce of pain is worth enduring." She chokes out gazing into his eyes with a sincerity he had never seen before. "I'd go through this pain in every lifetime, in every universe." She closed her eyes briefly, feeling each petal and stem that grew in her lungs, the stems slowly reaching up to her throat.

"I know you don't love me back. That you can't love me back," she paused, her shallow breath catching before she softly concluded. "But I won't erase you. My life is not worth it if there's no you."

Her words hung heavy in the air, a testament to the depth of her devotion. That killed Elijah a bit more inside. As he could never hold that type of devotion. That type of love she holds for him. It was selfish to let her continue the cycle. The friendship continued but her health faltered even more. He refused to be her downfall, to be the

reason she'd never go to high school again properly, the reason she'd never go out and explore marine life. A knot tightened in his chest, suffocating him with a sense of despair. Her acts of honesty and true, unwavering love pierced through the walls he had built his whole life, exposing the raw vulnerability he had long sought to bury. It was a cruel reminder of his own shortcomings; of the love he could never fully reciprocate. As her health deteriorated before his eyes, guilt gnawed at him, a relentless reminder of the role he played in her suffering. With a heavy heart, Elijah knew what needed to be done.

"Chels," he began once more, his voice barely above a whisper. "I cannot keep doing this." His words felt like a betrayal, each syllable cutting deep into what they'd built throughout years of friendship. "We both know you deserve so much more than what I can give you. I can't be the reason you suffer all this pain, I just can't."

"You can't or you won't Elijah?" Chelsea's voice trembled with a mixture of anguish and desperation, her eyes searching his for an answer she feared she wouldn't find. "What's stopping you I don't understand? There must be some part of you that loves me. I'm not gone yet." She spoke, a violent fit of coughing seized her, her hand clutching her chest in a futile attempt to ease the pain. Elijah rushed to her side, his heart aching with every agonizing cough.

"Please listen!" He rubs soothing circles on her back as the coughs let out the red-stained petals they've grown accustomed to. "Look what's happening to you. I just can't do it," he murmured, his voice strained.

"You need me removed from your life, Chelsea. For your own sake. You deserve to be free from the burden of loving someone who can never love you back the way you deserve." It was a bitter truth, one that tore at his soul, but Elijah knew it was the only way to save her from the relentless cycle of pain and heartache. The coughs worsened as the plant growth continued to wreak havoc on Chelsea's respiratory system. The realization that her love can no longer be a healthy reality feeling like daggers through her heart. Three years she's fought for this. Three years of this cycle of this love.

Nurses were called into the room by Elijah, the tears slipping from his eyes as he held her tightly knowing this would all be over soon. Once Chelsea was taken care of, he brings up the new treatment to erase himself from her life to her parents and sister. A silence filled the room as he explained that no one would ever be able to bring him up again or even see him. Chelsea would be moved to a different school far from the one Elijah attended. Reluctantly they agreed, knowing how hard it would be for Chelsea to lose her childhood friend from early childhood. Yet it was done. Each memory of Elijah Alon S. Cruz would be removed from Chelsea's mind. All the evidence would be destroyed, all love would be gone.

With a heavy heart, Elijah watched as the arrangements were made, knowing that soon he would cease to exist in Chelsea's world. Her memories of him would fade, their moments together relegated to mere shadows of the past. Yet, as he witnessed Chelsea's remarkable progress, her dreams within reach and her lungs finally free from the

constraints of the disease, a bittersweet sense of contentment washed over him. Though he could never express his pride to her in person, knowing that she was thriving brought him a sense of peace, even as his own existence faded into oblivion. Elijah continued to treasure his memories of the girl he once knew. Her melodic laugh, the passionate light in her eyes that never dimmed, her soft curly black hair, and these memories were the only memories in his mind.

Yet when he found himself in the 11th-grade boys' bathroom, consumed by violent coughs and wheezes, each hacking breath filled the air with a cacophony of dreadful sounds. As orange petals writhed and twisted their way up his convulsing throat, he couldn't help but laugh in irony. The pain was unbearable, each petal and stem tearing at his insides like razor-sharp claws. Was this fate's twisted way at getting back at him for the pain he had caused her? Elijah had always known he loved Chelsea. He wondered if losing her was punishing enough but as the heaving coughs continued, he guessed not. Elijah only knew one thing; he could never forget Chelsea Victoria R. Villaflor.

***Benjamin's Meditation on Battle* by Emma Gill**
2nd Place Photography



“The Jazz Playhouse” by Nea Guevara

3rd Place Short Stories

The group on stage, all sharply dressed, is each holding their own instrument. A man with a trumpet here, one on the keyboard, and another cradling a saxophone, as the man's fingers skillfully dance around each of the keys. These keys are an alphabet and the sax sings lead in this song, the rest follow creeping up on the sax's solo. The notes hijack the saxophone's guide and compete for their own limelight. It's a song all have played many nights before but it's always fresh and never the same, somehow always rearranging and rewriting itself into something new. It's a song full of conflict and compromise and it's playing in New Orleans, in an old club just off of Bourbon Street named, The Jazz Playhouse. The Jazz Playhouse is the very embodiment of passion and tradition.

Every member of the group sways to his own music, their faces warm under the stage lights, its brightness forcing the stark blue suits the men wear to soften with a pink hue and reflect off of every table in the establishment. The color brings a daze about the performance, like a dream, or maybe more a hypnosis. The lullaby entrances onlookers from the street and they marvel at the performance, reeling at the complete defiance of structure from just nights before. They crowd in, and the joint is alive with their presence. The dance floor fills with individuals enthralled by the music. They chase the notes, feet tracing every staff and head like the main floor in sheet music and their bodies a never ending tempo. They jump lines, trading partners with every song. Their faces are bright with laughter and dizzy with one-too-many drinks.

When the set ends a pause falls over the crowd and they each find a seat in anticipation for the next song. Patrons eye the movements of the band impatiently as they make their way from the stage to the backroom. Backstage the men rest up in modest dressing rooms, laughing at the success of the night. The walls are lined with floral wallpaper that has yellowed in the corners. Hanging off the walls are some of the biggest musicians to ever play at the club. Black and whites of men who were experimenting in that very club decades ago. All of them knew the owner of the place, who was a jazz player in his own right. The front house of the club was much more updated compared to the back but still had that simple charm that only comes with age. It sat a generous amount of people but on busy nights when more would pack in, they crowded the sides of the stage.

A fire marshal might have a heart attack with the crowd tonight, but the kitchen keeps up with its orders. Waiters rush by with trays of delectable entrees. Scattered across the tables are orders of po'boys with spicy shrimp, crunchy lettuce, fresh tomatoes; fish and chip baskets, a side of lemon wedge, a sour pickle, zesty tartar sauce; or a fried chicken sandwich, with a side of blue cheese, ranch, and crinkle-cut fries. Just as everyone is finished the band's break is over and the group starts up again with the music. Slowly, and then all at once the club is once more alive, but as even the night grows tired the musicians follow suit and smooth their untamable rhythm. The stage

lights cool to a deep blue changing the aura of the club yet again. Satisfied by the eventful evening the crowd dwindles, and the sweet woody smell of cigars dissipates from the air as patrons walk out into the warm night. Jazz is a work of art, each piece is unique, but nowadays it's dying. In that club where old school and new school artists alike play. They let their creativity speak for itself to keep that tradition alive and it wouldn't be possible to gather so many supporters without The Jazz Playhouse.

High Alert by Konnor Ray
1st Place Photography



“The Tell-Tale Son” by June Gibbons

1st Place Short Stories

Amelia Buck sat on the steps of her rickety old porch that groaned with the pain of being pinned under the weight of a thousand suns. Despite only being 40, everything that had taken place over the past six months had engraved soft wrinkles into Amelia’s forehead and the corners of her mouth where cigarettes stayed and frowns were worn, had painted strands of her hair a striking gray that stood out against the muted brown, and had cast a curse over her bones causing them to grow stiff and shaky similar to the porch she sat on.

When she was nearly halfway through her poorly hand-rolled cigarette, her husband, Edward Buck, had trudged up to the small shack from the property’s farm.

Edward had just passed the age of 52 and was a stout man, shorter than the 5’7” Amelia. The top of his head was a dull bald, covered now by a dusty tan hat, surrounded by short gray hair that was bound to disappear in the next ten years. He sat down next to his wife with a groan, an involuntary sound at this point in his life. Instead of looking at her husband, Amelia continued to look ahead at the horizon of 1927 Nebraska.

“How’s the boy?” Edward asked after he gave himself a few moments to catch his breath.

The woman couldn’t bring herself to answer. “Where is the boy?” he asked, a little louder.

“Inside, playin’,” Amelia answered, her voice barely above a whisper.

Edward nodded, not wanting to overwhelm his wife. The past six months were hard on him too, however, Amelia seemed to take it the hardest than anyone else.

“He’s not our boy, Ed,” she eventually said, breaking the newfound silence. “I know it. He’s not our Arvin.”

“I know.”

It was a nightmare come to life. Arvin had left home to go to the movies and hadn’t come back for over two hours. Amelia was already on high alert, while Ed was convinced that he would come back in due time.

But ‘due time’ never arrived. It hung in the air, avoiding their home like the plague, keeping their son away.

Ed was the one that did most of the talking at the police station. The officer on duty wouldn’t dare to listen to a hysterical, potentially grieving mother, even if it was his own. Her husband recounted everything perfectly, described the boy well enough but he missed one key detail.

“His scar- he has a scar from-” Arvin’s scar on the inside of his right bicep, no more than one inch in length, from when he tripped outside the farm at an awkward angle. A faint little thing, almost invisible, but Amelia could see it; it didn’t matter in what light, a mother’s eye never missed.

“Thank you, ma’am, that’ll be enough,” the officer dismissed her as he stood up.

Ed stood up as well and slid the officer the most recent picture of their son. “I sure do ‘preciate ya, sir. I have faith you’ll find him.”

The moment that the urgent knock shook the house, Amelia was up from her spot at the round kitchen table and at the door in no more than five seconds. She knew that no matter the words, it would change the course of her life. The door creaked as it swung open and the setting sunlight spilled into the splintering shack. Amelia nearly dropped to her knees and lost her heart.

It was her boy. Her son. Her Arvin.

Next to the same police officer that was given his description. “Ma’am, we believe we found your son. Arvin Buck, correct?”

Amelia’s knees finally gave out, and she hit the floor with a thud, now at eye level with her son. She reached out to caress the boy’s cheek. She then gazed up at the officer and nodded, overwhelmed with emotion. “Yes- it’s him, it’s my boy.”

“Okay, ma’am, well that should be all...”

The officer’s voice trailed off in her ears as she dragged the boy into her arms.

Mother and son finally reunited. Finally together again. The last five months have been in vain. Arvin was okay after all. Scrawnier and a little beat up, but Amelia attributed that to his plight.

It started out with small things. Foods that Arvin loved before were now pushed away with a twisted expression, the boy had developed an accent, and he no longer said “mom” but “ma”. Amelia was no expert when it came to trauma, in fact, no one at the time really was, so she surmised that the dialect and taste bud changes were results.

But after a month, everything started to fall apart. As the boy grew more comfortable, he distanced himself farther and farther from the old Arvin. Amelia had initially blamed her slowly fraying mind, but when Ed’s eyebrows knitted together at the way the boy talked to her one night at the dinner table, everything was confirmed to her in that moment.

That was not her boy. The slight one inch indentation of skin on his bicep was gone and it was not because of the lighting or because it took five months to heal completely. It was gone because this kid never tripped and landed awkwardly on the pile of rocks just outside of the property line. Everything suddenly made sense to her.

“So what are we gonna do about him?” Ed’s voice penetrated the still air that surrounded the two after they came to the same understanding.

“Go to the station, I suppose,” Amelia breathed out along with the last huff of her cigarette.

Ed nodded and placed his hands on his knees, pushing himself up from the porch with the same involuntary groan that left his throat when sitting down. “I’ll talk-”

Amelia shook her head as she pushed her cigarette into the porch under her thumb. “I’ll do it,” she said before taking his outstretched hand and pulling herself up. “You talk to the boy, least we can do is learn his name.”

Ed nodded and disappeared into the home. After what she assumed to be no more than ten minutes, he came back out. “Lyndon Hill,” he said after a beat of silence. “That’s it. Lyndon Hill.”

The officer wouldn’t hear any of it. So much so that the sheriff had to get involved. “Y’all gave us a fake boy!” Amelia’s voice came out cracked like a fragment of an ancient clay vase through her tear stained face. “It ain’t Arvin! He’s a dud... he’s a- he’s a-”

“Ma’am, we don’t know what you want,” the sheriff said plainly.

“I want my son back,” she bit back with such intensity that the sheriff almost considered believing her. Almost.

“You have your son back. You’re just a bad mother for not seeing that. So bad in fact you’re making up last minute lies about a scar! You didn’t mention that in your initial report so clearly it wasn’t important then. You realize how crazy you sound? We outta send you straight to the nut house if you can’t even recognize your own son.”

And that’s just what they did. They sent the grieving Amelia Buck to the asylum 30 miles down the road. That’s where she were to spend her days and her son would spend his days away from home if he had any left.

After six months in that hell hole, Ed came to visit her. She was shaking, fully convinced Arvin was still wandering around, trying to find his way home. After all, she figured that forever lost was better than forever dead.

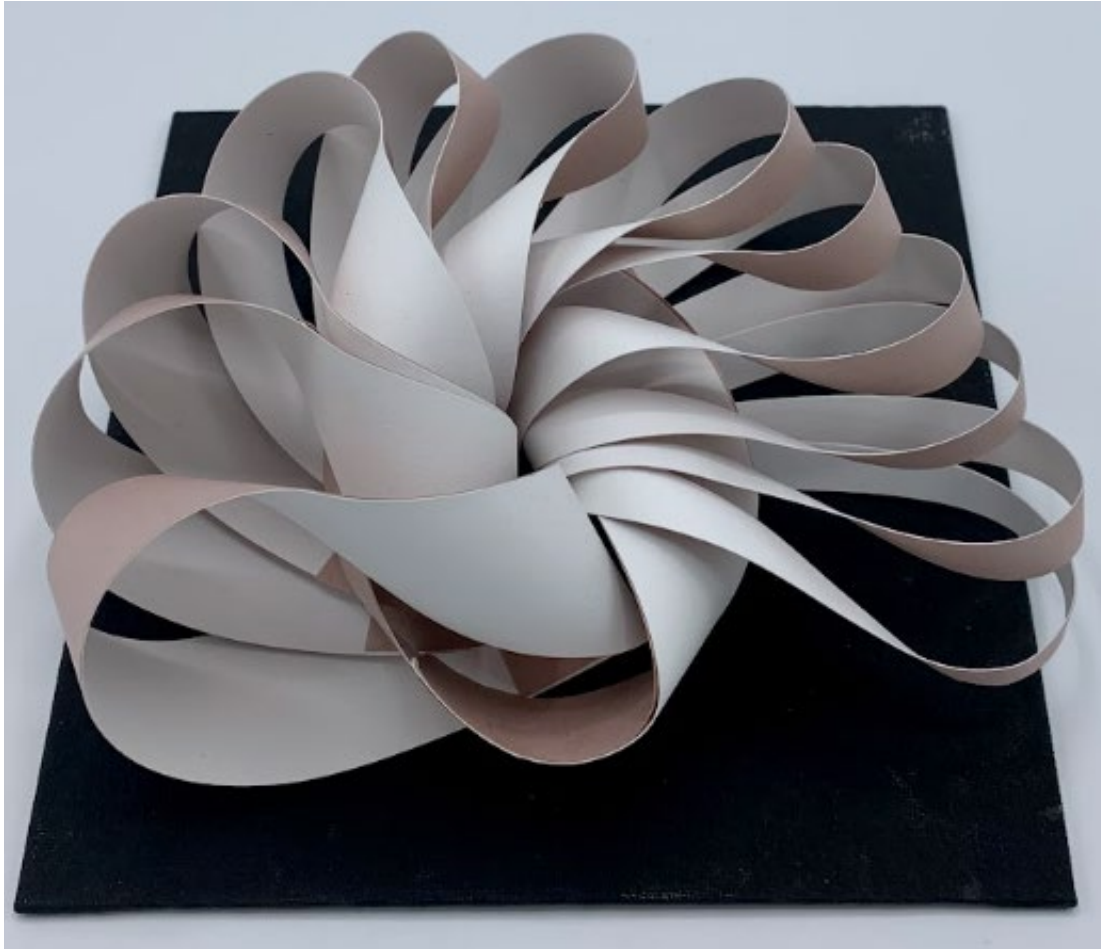
“They found him, sweetheart,” Ed breathed out as soon as Amelia sat down in front of him.

She could feel her hope build up again.

“They found his body on that line farm 10 miles away from the house,” he continued with a somber expression. “Scar and all.”

And just like that, Amelia knew she’d spend the rest of her life inside the asylum.

***Harmony* by Esteban Lopez-Flores**
1st Place Sculpture



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.

All currently enrolled CTC students worldwide can submit their writings and art for publication consideration at the beginning of the fall semester.

All work should be submitted electronically to: [Byways Submission form](#) or Byways@ctcd.edu.

Artwork - digital photos of your work can be submitted in any of the JPEG (.jpg) format.

Writing submissions should be submitted in Rich Text Format (.rtf) or as a Word Document (.doc).

Please include your **title of work, art medium, email address, phone number** and **physical mailing address** with your submission.

There is a limit of two entries for each Byways category.

For more information about BYWAYS and submission requirements, contact Byways@ctcd.edu

“Boy, I dunno how to feel, when you tell me it all wasn't real / The cold kept me safe and now it's so warm. Tell me, was she the better deal?” – *December* by Mary Caitlynne V Ryals

“I can be red / You can eat me in bed I can be blue / You can put me in your shoe. / I can be green Just don't make a scene.” - *Gummy Bears* by Abigail Hedge

“I want my son back,’ she bit back with such intensity that the sheriff almost considered believing her. Almost.” - *The Tell Tale Son* by June Gibbons

“He loathed the fluorescent lights and sterile decor, but he would rather die than not pay a visit to an old friend.” - *Bulaklak* by Mary Caitlynne V Ryals

“She mourns for a house far away, the white walls standing firm / in old pictures, in dusky dreams, in pitiful soliloquies.” - *Homeless Mother*” by Luigi Gonzalez Garcia

“It’s hard to see the woman that she has now become / And you don’t want to face that your part in her life is done.” - *Grown* by Savannah Carrizales

“Before the storm would come and take me away. / My love as sweet as honey and wine I'll wait for you in the divine.” - *Honey & Wine* by Mary Caitlynne V Ryals

“Time has passed and we’re old and gray, but we ain’t gonna stop cruising today. I love you more than you’ll ever know, and my only hope is that you love me so.” - *Open Roads* by Roman S. Gladue

