Ampersand

Ampersand is an annual journal published by the English Department of Carson-Newman College and is the collaborative effort of students in Graphic Design ART 463, under the direction of Julie L. Rabun, and Creative Writing Seminar ENG 327, under the direction of Susan O’Dell Underwood.

As the word which describes the symbol for “and,” Ampersand reflects the spirit of collaboration in the creative community of Carson-Newman College. It is also a nod toward the future, implying a fresh start of a new generation in a new millennium.

Graphic Designers: Daniel Aisenbrey
Rachelle Burgett
Julie Burton
Cory Jones
Gretchen Hill

Literary Editors: David Austin
SarahJane Bennett
Bethany Brown
Destry Cloud
Kyrie Gordon
Kimberly Grace
Emily Davis
Kayla Beth Moore
Olivia Wood


On publication all rights revert to the authors and artists. The opinions and creative ideas appearing in Ampersand do not necessarily reflect those of editorial staff, graphic designers, faculty advisors, or Carson-Newman College.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Train Magician</td>
<td>Kayla Beth Moore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>Chalkboard</td>
<td>Megan McSwain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Conversations with the Needle: the Tattooed Lady</td>
<td>Olivia Wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>Waverly and Her Parasitic Twin, Willow: (Head, arms, and torso extending from Waverly’s chest)</td>
<td>Olivia Wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>Anticipation of the Clown</td>
<td>Olivia Wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td>Sleeping with Sieg: The Midget</td>
<td>Olivia Wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09</td>
<td>Moon Affair: Lucia the Wolfboy</td>
<td>Olivia Wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The Affair of a Moonflower</td>
<td>Caitlin Nichols</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>The Minstrel</td>
<td>Destry Cloud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Negative Print</td>
<td>Elli Edwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>I Caught Myself</td>
<td>Kyrie Gordon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Mysterious Suitcase</td>
<td>Kevin McArthur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Writer’s Cramp</td>
<td>Bethany Brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Rainy Day</td>
<td>Markie Secrest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Writer’s Cramp (continued)</td>
<td>Bethany Brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Sonnet 19.5</td>
<td>David Autin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>A House Through Time</td>
<td>Vanessa Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>To My Brother in Alaska</td>
<td>Kayla Beth Moore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Test-Tube Sized Jesus</td>
<td>Kayla Beth Moore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Crosswords</td>
<td>Wyatt Miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Nightmare</td>
<td>Emily Davis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Chopped</td>
<td>SarahJane Bennett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Sunny Haven Nursing Home</td>
<td>Kathryn Barber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Never Never Land</td>
<td>Kathryn Barber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Westminster</td>
<td>Kyrie Gordon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Zombie Apocalypse</td>
<td>Vanessa Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Unstable Reflections</td>
<td>Kathryn Barber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>I am Rappacini’s Daughter</td>
<td>SarahJane Bennett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Wrapped in Shadows</td>
<td>Kayla Beth Moore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>A Hester Prynne, A Holy Mother</td>
<td>Destry Clouod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>stream of thought</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Decode</td>
<td>Rai Schatz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Evil-ball My Verbal Tie-Dye</td>
<td>SarahJane Bennett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>The Price of Silence</td>
<td>Kathryn Barber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>Peeping Sally</td>
<td>Katelyn Pardue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Drowning Ivory</td>
<td>SarahJane Bennett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Deadly Parade</td>
<td>Hannah B. Williams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Taking Flight</td>
<td>Destry Clouod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>Winter</td>
<td>SarahJane Bennett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>After Winter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>Contributors’ Notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
He prances from side to side, displaying a single silver rupee, they know this little round piece of metal well. It is the meager product of the father’s toil, and the source of his family’s woes. The magician stops mid-stride, and closes his fist. When he opens it, the coin is gone. He spreads his fingers wide, making a spectacle of his naked hand. He sets his gaze on the baby in the mother’s lap. The crowd gasps, except for the occasional heavy sigh. The baby lifts his eyes to see a strange man pushing his way into the crowded car. In a bright red jacket and a top hat, the man plops down onto a seat. Every tired traveler in the car laughs along with the baby. The baby grins, and the father’s face softens into something other than a frown. Slowly reaching behind the baby’s ear, he produces the coin, and holds it high above his head triumphantly. The crowd is silent, except for the occasional heavy sigh. The door of the train slams shut. The people scurry in finding seats where they can, and holding onto overhead bars when they can’t. The door of the train slams shut. The train track boys run to catch a ride. The crowd is silent, except for the occasional heavy sigh. A ticket to Serampore from Howrah Station costs one hundred rupees. It was scraped up from the father’s satchel, before the mother grabbed his shirt tail, and clutched their baby close to her chest, as he forged a way onto the train through the mob. The crowd is silent, except for the occasional heavy sigh. It is the meager product of the father’s toil, and the source of his family’s woes. The people scurry in finding seats where they can, and holding onto overhead bars when they can’t.
Take your inky finger and prick me, 
bruise my unmarked skin a healthy green—
the scales of the dragon’s back.
Blow on the reptile and see how he pimples:
evidence that his existence
is only skin-deep. But watch,
if I move this way, he dances.
Perhaps he is hoping to attract a mate:
Maybe Mona Lisa who waits
in the secret wisdom of my thigh
will spare a moment’s demure
to blow that horny-dragon a kiss;
or maybe Washington, who crosses my
Delaware-hips, will flash his wooden teeth
and wink before returning to his course.
Madame Blavatsky’s crystal ball
foretells defeat for the good-love wishers:
Leda’s Swan is scheduled to fill the void
at dragon’s side next year.

Listen to right shoulder’s Eve mock the dragon.
Her cheeks, flushed in mirth,
turn toward left shoulder’s Adam.
Poor woman, she is unaware of the cobra
curled ‘round my Cleopatra-breast, that watches
ill-amused and hungry. Forgive me—
the noise disturbs you—but they are a lively lot.
They do not wish to be covered, you see,
Olivia Wood

so I let them sing. But please,

may I make one request?
Make the dragon’s tongue long and thorough
so it might lick me over,
cover me with its inky saliva
’til all trace of former skin is history
and when asked, What race?
I will answer—Not one, but every.

Conversations with
the Needle: Jannette
the Tattooed Lady

Olivia Wood

I used to suck on her hair like a blanket.
I used to dress her up like a doll and throw my voice to make her say Ma-ma.
I used to wave her lifeless arms and chase my neighbors across the street screaming
She’s aliiive!
I used to blow on her belly and pretend I could read her lips when they moved.
I used to let the hateful voices buzz on her back and not brush them away.
I used to roll her face-down on the pillow, thinking she might smother.
I used to dream of cutting her off.
I have tried once.

Waverly and Her Parasitic
Twin, Willow: (Head,
arms, and torso extending
from Waverly’s chest)
You are pressing your ear against my chest when you say,
*I can hear your heart beating.*
I ask if it is loud;
*No,* you tell me, it is *lazy.*

I am amused by the swirl in your hair.
I hum my fingers through it,
removing, one-by-one,
the pesky white thoughts that burrow into your unhappiness. Would it help if you pretend I am the mother you never had?
I will hold you, child,
until you roll away from me a man. Trust me, you are not the only man I’ve known who’s felt smaller than himself.

I remember a puppy from my childhood—blind—who used to press against anything with warmth: its mouth open, searching for a nipple. How quietly it accepted the bag and the brick as daddy threw it into the river—he didn’t even watch it sink to the bottom.
Moon has passed the peak of her arc as she slides toward morning: her whispered light throws lazy shadows from the corners of train cars. You slink between them past the snores of trapeze swingers and daredevils riding bareback on their dreams. The bull elephant trumpets his unwanted separation from the cow and her alluring urine.

You reach the edge of the camp as a cloud creeps to clothe Moon. You spot a wheat-covered crest where you will perform your communion: an undisturbed sea of hair that you part with your body like the tooth of a comb. You have the vantage of a meridian between the wild and the civil. You belong to neither.

The cotton against your fur burns; you remove it quickly. You are naked, only in the sense that a dog is naked. You piss on a spot of bare earth, pant gray mist to watch it scatter and wait for Moon.

Her corner becomes visible and your anticipation of her uncovering erests every hair on your body. A growl from the earth grabs the palms of your feet and arches through your neck in liberation. No one hears your howl except maybe a little boy a mile away, who, frightened by your anguish, snuggles closer to his mother. You wait for an answer, but you know one never comes.

Sun will make his appearance soon, pushing Moon and her secrets back into the dark where they belong.
"Love is the flower of life, and blossoms unexpectedly and without law, and must be plucked where it is found, and enjoyed for the brief hour of its duration."
-D. H. Lawrence

Tease, taunt, and beckon.
Only coming out under cover of dark,
the moonlight trickling through the trees.
You climb up my lattice work, onto the window sill,
and creep into my bedroom, into my soul.
With your intoxicating fragrance
and your velvet touch.
I long to see this bloom
surrounded by sunlight, displayed before the world.
But not until the stars glitter the sky
will I see your enchanting face.

Our encounter is brief, but passionate,
knowing our time is rooted to this place.
The sun is rising.
A few hours to unfold these petals
and entwine these vines, embracing.
I dare not pick this flower, I let it grow,
knowing the fateful night ahead.
I bask in your beauty, cast under your spell.
Acknowledging you'll depart, death by dawn.
Insisting, I comply with longing.
Desiring more than this nightly revel.

This bud craves satisfaction. I crave sustainment.
But no matter how deep
these thorns may pierce my skin.
I wait for your habitual return.
As the morning encroaches on the horizon
your ferocity fading, my worth waning.
Withering, lifeless, and spent
you slither out of the window.
And slowly descend down
fading into the new day.
As I walked alone tonight,
along paths of grey,
a single beam of moonlight peeked through the clouds
and tickled a tiny crumple of brush.
A hint of a breeze breathed life into the pile
and a small crackle snapped in the stillness
as the pieces formed a little man made of twigs
only four inches high.

An acorn cap presented his face,
the pointy end his nose,
and on his back a leaf,
flapping as a cape.

An awkward bow he made to me,
then produced a tiny fiddle
of hollow bark and a sliver of grass.

Brandishing a bow of resin and a single stray hair,
he twilled a little trill
causing the nearby crickets to silence in jealousy.

Curiosity drove me to my knees
as the little man smacked a slug with his bow,
fiendish that the monster should slither so close.

“Hello,” I greeted.
“Hello to you!” replied a little voice,
“Such a beautiful night,
don’t you say?”
I nodded,
and requested the miniscule musician to play on.

Blazes of amber glittered from the moonbeams
as he played with great love.
A small brown mouse danced from the grass,
stepping to the beat of the jig,
until finally, out of breath,
the tiny creature bowed low,
and plopped on the ground,
finishing the song seated.

Abruptly halting once more,
the little twig figure dashed after the slug and smacked a beetle,
which he grumbled had been teasing the slimy creature.
He then inquired something of a nearby spider,
and she allowed him to take some of her web
with a payment of some small red crystals he shook from his face.

Lacing up the slug to his cloak with the silk,
he bowed to me once more and said,
“It was good seeing you again,
but I really must go.
Farewell!”

The moonlight was dammed for a brief moment,
but when vision returned,
the minstrel was gone.
I sighed as I rose to my feet and continued my journey,
the crickets began playing once more,
not to be outdone.
Yet as I walked,
a faint jig blew in the wind,
and I grinned at the skill.
The day Ketzia Amaroq’s first novel was released, I went to Border’s and bought a copy. I spend about ten minutes afterwards sitting in my car just staring at the photograph of her on the back cover before I remembered that the babysitter had to leave at five and started the car. The picture was in black and white, but I could see the woman it portrayed in full color: her dark brown hair, the deep natural tan she got from her Russian-Inuit father, the blue eyes she inherited from her Anglo-Irish mother. I knew that face so well.

It only took me two nights to get through the book, but I’m a fast reader. Once I finished, I had to resist the urge to haul out the high school yearbooks sitting in a box under the bed of the guest room. I had to tell myself not to think about her that way, because that ship was long gone. I made the choice to break up with Ketzia when I went off to college. I made the choice to start dating my sister’s friend April. I made the choice to marry April after we graduated from college. I made the choice to divorce April after two years of fighting—and after she left me for a stripper. I made the choice to adopt my nephew Ben after my sister Adele, who was never all that stable to begin with, finally went off the deep end. Every time I caught myself regretting anything—and it happened more frequently after I read Ketzia’s book, and re-read it—I had to remember that my life was the way it was because I chose to make it that way.

A week after Ketzia’s novel came out Tora Belmont called me. Tora’s parents owned the penthouse on the top floor of the apartment building where my sister and I lived with our uncle as kids. Ketzia’s family had lived in that building too, and all of the kids knew each other because we were fairly close in age. We were the scourge of the building as teenagers. Tora called to invite me to a dinner party she was holding in honor of Ketzia’s book getting published.

“It’ll be great, Zack,” she insisted. “It’s been two months
since the whole gang was together, you know. Sean and Suki already said yes, and of course Ket and Aaron will be there. We’re just missing you.”

Sean was Ketizia’s older brother; he and his wife Suki lived in the same apartment building as me. Aaron was another member of the “old gang”. He was the same age as Tora and the two of them had been best friends for years. Tora herself had made it a point to keep in touch with me and the others over the years, apparently just for the purpose of coercing us into reunions every so often.

I sighed. “I don’t know, Tor.” Seeing everyone again wasn’t exactly at the top of my list of priorities, and it had absolutely nothing to do with the fact that Aaron and Ketizia were dating. They’d been dating for two years, and I had no right to be annoyed by it. I should have known it was pointless to try to avoid anything Tora was orchestrating. She had been too bossy for her own good when she was twelve, and she only got better with time.

“Listen here, Zachary King. I have a table reserved for six people at the Lotus House at seven o’clock. You will be there, whether you like it or not.” Her orders given, the young woman I used to quietly refer to as “Princess” hung up.

I sighed again and went to look for the babysitter’s number. Lots of people (including Tora, Adele, and April) had called me a pushover before; I’d never bothered to correct them because they were right.

“Listen here, Zachary King. I have a table reserved for six people at the Lotus House at seven o’clock. You will be there, whether you like it or not.” Her orders given, the young woman I used to quietly refer to as “Princess” hung up.

I sighed again and went to look for the babysitter’s number. Lots of people (including Tora, Adele, and April) had called me a pushover before; I’d never bothered to correct them because they were right.

Two hours later, Aaron Geoffries made an announcement that made Tora nearly choke on the water she was drinking. “You can’t be serious,” she said as soon as she could speak again.

Aaron had just announced that he and Ketizia were engaged. He seemed to have expected us to congratulate him, but Sean was just staring at Ketizia as though she had grown as second head. She avoided eye-contact with her brother, choosing instead to look down at the tablecloth. After a moment passed, in which it became painfully clear no one was going to say anything nice, Aaron frowned at Tora. “Why would you think I wasn’t serious?”

Tora glared at him over the rim of her glasses. “Because you two aren’t in love with each other. You don’t know it yet, but I can see it in Ket’s face.” Then she rounded on me. “And don’t you have anything to say about this?”

I really didn’t; I was just as surprised as she was. Sean saved me from even trying to come up with an answer Tora would have accepted. He pointed at Aaron. “You! I thought you were safe! I didn’t think you would try to do anything to my baby sister!”

If there was anything any of us could count on, it was Sean’s tendency toward the dramatic. Ketizia rolled her eyes. “I’m twenty-six, Sean. Stop calling me that.”

I took a sip from my own glass of water, finally regaining my voice. “Congratulations,” I said, just managing to be heard over Sean’s further protests and Suki’s attempts to calm her husband down. Everyone was quiet again, only now they were staring at me. I only looked at Ketizia, and her blue eyes locked with my brown ones. “I hope you two are happy together.”

In an instant Tora was out of her seat and grabbing my arm; she yanked me out of my chair. “You and I need to talk,” she hissed before addressing the rest of the group. “Please, continue. We’ll be right back.” It wasn’t fair for such a small woman (I’ve always been the tallest of the group, while she’s the shortest) to be so strong, but I’d learned a long time ago that it was easier to follow when Tora pulled than to try to resist. She tugged me all the way out of the restaurant and into the parking lot before shoving me up against the outer wall of the building, clearly not caring that it was starting to snow and we’d left our coats inside. “What the hell is wrong with you?” she
demanded.

“Ben has a cold,” I told her. “The doctor said he’d be fine and the babysitter said she’d take care of him, but…”

“No, you idiot. I don’t care why you were distracted earlier; I want to know why you’re the only one not throwing a fit about Ket and Aaron getting married.”

I looked away. “It’s their decision. If that’s what they want to do, I’m not about to stop them. The least any of us can do is be supportive.”

She shook her head. “Don’t give me that ‘if you love someone, let them go’ crap, Zack. I’d buy it if Ket loved Aaron, but she doesn’t—not the way she should if she’s marrying him—and every one of us knows it. Aaron won’t admit it because he’s had a crush on her for half of his life, and Ket won’t admit that she still loves you.”

“She does not,” I responded automatically. Tora gave me a dirty look. “What do you want me to do, Tor?” I asked. “This isn’t some chick flick or romance novel where I storm in the day of the wedding when the reverend asks if there are any objections and insist that Ketzia marry me instead of Aaron. I’m the one who ended things between me and her, in case you’ve forgotten. She deserves the chance to be happy and start her own family, not to have to deal with all of my issues.”

“Ket knows all about your issues, Zack,” Tora countered. “She understands about Adele, she adores Ben, and she thinks that April can go to-”

I cut her off. “Enough, Tora. Ketzia and I haven’t dated for ten years. We were together in high school. She’s engaged to Aaron now, and as much as I hate that, I’m not going to say anything to her so just let it go!”

Her green eyes narrowed for a moment, and then she sighed. “I’m not just doing this for you and her, you know.” Tora crossed her arms. “Aaron has been my best friend since we were twelve. I don’t want him to make a mistake like this either.”

I moved away from the wall, heading for the restaurant door so I could get my coat and say goodbye to the others. “Then tell him that. Don’t depend on me.”

I felt like a hypocrite for telling her to let go of something when I couldn’t, but for once Tora didn’t call me on it.

~

Two weeks later I was helping Ben open his Christmas presents when the doorbell rang. My four-year-old nephew sprang up and ran for the door. “Auntie Ket!”

I frowned as I stood up to follow him. Ben and I were supposed to join the others at Tora’s place for Christmas dinner, a tradition she established after she graduated from college and moved into her own apartment. She had called me the day after the restaurant incident and apologized for yelling at me. I told her she was already forgiven. By tradition, Ben would play with Sean and Suki’s twin daughters while the adults goofed off and reminisced. I assumed Ketzia and Aaron would be visiting Ketzia’s brother and sister-in-law (who lived two floors down) today, but she and I didn’t usually see each other outside of the group gatherings.

By the time I reached him, Ben had already unlocked the deadbolt on the front door by standing on a nearby chair and was opening the door. “Merry Christmas, Auntie Ket!” he shouted with a grin.

Ketzia looked down at him in surprise. “Merry Christmas, Ben. Where’s your dad?”

I adopted Ben when he was less than a year old, so he had no memories of his biological parents, my sister and her boyfriend. As far as he knew I was his parent, and everyone else referred to me as his father. “Sorry,” I told Ketzia. “He’s getting faster.” I picked Ben up off the chair he was standing on and ruffled his shaggy brown hair. “Why
don’t you do finish opening that present from your Great-Uncle Ethan? Auntie Ket and I will be there in a minute.” He nodded, and I put him down so he could run back to the living room.
Ketzia watched him go. “He’s looking more and more like Jet,” she said. Jet had gone to high school with us, and he was the guy who got my sister Adele into drugs before he eventually knocked her up, though at least he had the decency to stay with her after he found out. Adele didn’t even want to have the baby, but Jet convinced her to keep it. Ben was five months old when Jet accidentally overdosed and died. Adele wound up in the mental ward a few weeks later, and I adopted Ben.
I smiled slightly. “He has Adele’s eyes, though. Is Aaron still downstairs? I know the twins adore him.”
She bit her lip and toyed with the end of her long braid. “No, he… he went to Tora’s early. She called a little while ago and said she needed to talk to him. I figured… since I was in the building, and my dad isn’t expecting me and Sean until one… Well, I knew you and Ben would probably be opening presents. I didn’t want to intrude or anything…” I caught myself wanting to take the hand that was playing with her hair and kiss the indecision away. But the light sparkled in the diamond in her engagement ring, and I pushed that thought away almost as quickly as it came. “It’s fine. You’re welcome here any time.”
She still looked hesitant. “Are you sure?”
“I’m sure, ‘Zia.” I hadn’t meant to use my old nickname for her. No one else called her that; even Aaron called her “Ket”.
She didn’t seem to mind. She smiled and took off her coat, placing it on the chair that Ben had made use of earlier. “Thanks, Zack.”
“No problem.”
“Auntie Ket! Daddy!” Ben cried as we joined him in the living room. “Uncle Ethan got me a train!”
Ketzia looked perfect sitting on the floor with me and Ben while the three of us put together the train set my uncle had sent. Even if Tora was wrong and Ketzia wasn’t still in love with me, I was still in love with her. She hadn’t been mine for ten years, and yet again I caught myself regretting things that were too late to change.

Later that night, Ben sat at the designated “kids table” and described his train set to Sean and Suki’s twins while at the “adult table”, Tora told one of her favorite stories from our teenage years.
“And then he got stuck in the fence, remember?” Tora laughed. “Aaron had such a hard time getting him out…”
Sean, the subject of Tora’s anecdote, pouted. “It wouldn’t have taken so long if you’d helped him.” Suki giggled and patted her husband’s arm.
Aaron grinned. “She was too busy laughing at us.”
My eyes and Ketzia’s met across the table, which was littered with empty dessert plates. We smiled at each other, and I gave myself a small mental kick. It was too easy, when we were all together and talking about the past, to forget that we weren’t a bunch of teenagers anymore. It didn’t help that Tora had probably put us across from each other on purpose.
Tora stood up and stretched. “Okay, we’ll open presents in half an hour.” The kids cheered, which only made Tora’s grin wider. “In the meantime, I say Aaron should play us some seasonal music.”
Aaron shook his head, smiling. “You only keep that piano so you can make me play for you.” She had made him play whenever the mood struck her since they were thirteen and she found out he was taking piano lessons.
Tora clapped one hand down on his shoulder. “You got that right.”

The group slowly gravitated toward Tora’s living room, the adults taking more time than the children. Sean and Suki settled on the couch, the kids arranged themselves on the floor, and Tora leaned against
the piano as Aaron sat on the bench. Ketzia took it upon herself to clean up the discarded plates, and I decided to slip outside onto Tora’s balcony.

I was leaning against the railing and trying to enjoy the view when the sliding glass door opened. I could hear Tora singing as Aaron played “O Holy Night” for a moment before the door closed. My coat was placed over my shoulders.

“You should know better than to stand outside in the snow without a coat,” Ketzia said softly. She joined me at the railing. “Remember the Christmas before you graduated from high school? You went with our family to my grandmother’s house, and we sat on her front porch because Sean and Suki were making out in the living room. We just sat there and watched the snow fall.” She sighed. “I miss little things like that.”

I sighed too. “Ketzia, we really shouldn’t be alone like this.”

She frowned. “Why not?”

I looked out at the skyline. “Because the longer we’re alone, ‘Zia, and the more we talk, the more likely I am to do something we’ll both regret.” This time I used the nickname on purpose.

She put her left hand on my cheek and turned my face toward her.

“What if neither of us regrets it, Zachary Christopher?” I took her hand and pulled it down. She was the only one who ever called me by my first and middle name, and she hadn’t done it in ten years.

“One of us will,” I replied. I didn’t let go of her hand right away, though. Something was different, and it took me a moment to realize what it was. “…You’re not wearing your engagement ring.”

She looked at me calmly. “I know.”
Igniting
Deep in the dough, the yeast sparks,
flaring slowly, surely, determinedly, out.
A fire that will end one way:
fluffy and golden brown, curling contentedly into your stomach.

And then the days when that goading blaze
rests in a stillness, an uncontainable peace
filling and draining my lungs.
Dying to be described.

Feeling
The crisp white blank sheet of paper swirls
up and around me into the cape of a fairy queen
desperate to save her people from slavery.

Riding the dappled gray wind, swirling
in the unutterable ecstasy of adventure, bursting
with flavors and multicolored fruit trees
dancing across the page, flailing embracing-
arms, tripping the graceful ballet of what is in my heart, wanting
to get into straight black lines on a flat white page of paper.
Picking
Pluck the words from the tree one by one,
feel purpled to be sure it is firm,
and twinkle should be soft enough to leave,
one by one, the trail of fingerprints patterning its flesh.

Pare the bruises and excesses out of anthropomorphic
until you find the human soul.
Add sugar to just and right,
soothe the puckers that inevitably come.

Smell the summer in warmth and grow.
Pound your feet in the bin of intoxicating joy,
feeling the Divine shiver as you create what others will
taste and see.
Compelling
You with your knife-shaped shadows
and me with a candle curiously like a pen,
scratching, carving a way out.

But you are like Dorothea who,
a sewing-slave for years, would not leave the dungeon
when the knight threw back the doors.

She turned her back on his torch
happy, content in the dark,
eyes squinting, straining to see the stitches.

David Austin
Sonnet 19.5

For five hundred odd years old Shakes has fought
alone, and bravely held the line 'gainst Time.
Some beauty has the dead Man saved and naught
do we but watch and clap. I see this crime
of audience, for so long gone ignored,
and unprepared I bare my pen and page.
Hold on, my friend, though you dance where I tread,
not one day more shall you alone hold Age
at bay. Reinforcements, supplies, brothers
in arms where you’ll have me. Love’s not Time’s fool,
though He may now be yours. The old beast stirs
against your loves, those lines that Age holds cruel.
And by my eyes, my hands, my pen, my heart
I swear Time will not rip our loves apart.
Standing in the presence of pristine and prolific peaks
more enormously breathtaking than any man-conceived thing,
how wide and deep does your smile reach?

Does it reach down to your restless, wandering core?
Does it root itself within your heart, and run with your veins through the rest of you
until it sprouts from your toes, digs itself into the arid soil beneath you,
giving you no choice but to stand there and gaze?
Keeping you there.

Or does the grandeur take you back to the smell
of Momma’s Christmas cinnamon, and Daddy’s barn
filled with summer hay? Do you recall the sound of our
mingling laughters, and wish to laugh with me again?

Do you miss anything of home, of me?
Or, standing there, beholding that virgin landscape,
breathing it into yourself,
are you home at last?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Kayla Beth Moore</strong></th>
<th><strong>Test-Tube Sized Jesus</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I Want a Test-Tube Sized Jesus</td>
<td>I want Jerusalem and Athens to be reconciled at last.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The hermeneutic of humanity is not as easily deciphered as the golden Gospel story.</td>
<td>I want a God who fits inside my questions and my test-tubes, so that I can understand,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I see thousands of fireflies illuminating themselves in perfect rhythm and time,</td>
<td>give the world a Band-Aid, and hand out answers along with Kleenexes and hugs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think, “It must be designed.” But then, there seem to be so many places where Providence does not fit.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The jungles of the Congo, where tiny boy soldiers carry AK-47’s,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Red-light districts of Kolkata, where thirteen year-old prostitutes wait in line each night,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the six-thousand children, without fresh water to drink, who die daily, silently—</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show me omnipotence there.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to believe in good things.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Emily Davis

Nightmare

She stares down the long aisle of lace and pink petals, and reaches for her father’s arm.
A smile, a tear, a kiss on the cheek.
She takes a step toward the altar, and feels him pull away.
Where has he gone? And why did he leave?
She frantically turns, searching for that face, the one she grew up looking at, the one she shouldn’t forget.
But what does he look like? And why can’t she remember?
A collection of faces stare at her with expectant eyes, but she can’t find the pair that matches hers.
Another step forward, and the doors close behind her, leaving her to walk alone.

Wyatt Miles

Crosswords

She’s the kind of girl
Who does her crosswords in pen
Without looking at the clues
Just lets her intuitions take control
She’s the kind of girl
Who drinks her coffee in black
Without tasting it
Just lets it slide on down her throat
She’s the kind of girl
Who doesn’t have time for me
But she’ll make time for me
If I’ll just ask her
She’s the kind of girl
Who sees the crosswords as means
To make a statement
About who she is
I’m the kind of guy
Who thinks too much on puzzles
It puzzles me that she
Finds me worth her time

Emily Davis

3635

She’s the kind of girl
Who does her crosswords in pen
Without looking at the clues
Just lets her intuitions take control
She’s the kind of girl
Who drinks her coffee in black
Without tasting it
Just lets it slide on down her throat
She’s the kind of girl
Who doesn’t have time for me
But she’ll make time for me
If I’ll just ask her
She’s the kind of girl
Who sees the crosswords as means
To make a statement
About who she is
I’m the kind of guy
Who thinks too much on puzzles
It puzzles me that she
Finds me worth her time

Emily Davis

Nightmare

She stares down the long aisle of lace and pink petals, and reaches for her father’s arm.
A smile, a tear, a kiss on the cheek.
She takes a step toward the altar, and feels him pull away.
Where has he gone? And why did he leave?
She frantically turns, searching for that face, the one she grew up looking at, the one she shouldn’t forget.
But what does he look like? And why can’t she remember?
A collection of faces stare at her with expectant eyes, but she can’t find the pair that matches hers.
Another step forward, and the doors close behind her, leaving her to walk alone.
Sunken onto pallets of old off-white cotton, the feeble for­get­ten­s wait. With their milky pupils straining, shrv­veled stomach­s loudly com­plain­ing, noth­ing, no noth­ing, but wait­ing.

Lying masses of mush and muscle num­bly star­ing at their sacred squares. Deep-set into their clowds of crusts and crumbs, they are soothed by the beep beeping of their own expir­ing hearts. com­mer­cial break. And so, they wait.

Beneath their un­kept strands of hair, sadly weighted with slick oil, they cycle and cycle and sleep and sleep. Retired robots blessed with a fam­ily who refused to let them give up the ghost; who saved them from being thrown into the dump; who have kept them for this wait­ing. Yes, these are your lucky bastards, waking to sleep and to stare. Cram­ming their yellow teeth between both raw, pink gums with their shaky skeleton hands, taste­ing the stench of last week’s sog­gy pota­tos and custard.

All down the hall you can hear them smacking their chapped lips, and hope­less­ly lick­ing the parched roofs of their mouths.

Peel away a stained recycled gown and hid­ing is a gray, shriveled canvas. See it try­ing to hide the organs ‘neath­he trans­parent mem­brane.
Organs that are all lining up to quit their jobs, weary of the waiting.
A lung, a kidney, a heart, a brain;
All ready to throw in the towel.
All waiting to wait no more.

Beneath each wrinkle lives a line of fleshy grit and grime.
Tucked beneath each fold thrives a new odor.
Putrid, sticky layers of lard-tinted excess
filmed over a blue printed terrain,
generously spotted with dark desert scars and lakes of purples.

One can only clinch their fists, cover their flared nostrils,
and close their eyes.
Yet then you hear their lungs raising their rattles,
the relaxed release of refreshing flatulence,
the wheezing of air passing by the tubes,
and them pick, pick, picking at their scabs
left by the rapes of needles.
Then you think about the dried blood
finding a home beneath their yellow nails.
Even that, too, is waiting.

So you open your eyes,
squeeze a musty hand,
and kiss a tear-smeared cheek;
fragile, cold silk against your lips.
Then you walk home slower than they would,
each step heavy with hating their waiting.
For you despise their bodies for refusing to follow
their spirits when they died.

---

Second star to the right,
straight on ’til morning.

I should like to go to
Never, Never Land, I think. Where are you with your pixie
dust, Peter Pan? I grew up believing in your stories, your magic;
the lost boys soaring way too fast through a clear blue sky. Maybe I could even
meet a mermaid, because I always wondered if they really existed... 
Through the years I was always dueling against a pretend Captain Hook—
duck, move, jump; trying to be a hero, like you, Peter. Maybe if I could get there,
youth wouldn’t fade, just remain frozen. We could be timeless, you and I.
I could fly and glow, like Tinker Bell. All I need is some of that magic pixie dust,
and a happy thought... you could save me, you know.

Come and find me, Peter Pan.
Come and rescue me.
The world ended on a Thursday. It was supposed to end on a Monday or Tuesday, so some of those affected were annoyed at the powers that be. After all, if an apocalypse is scheduled for a certain day, that schedule ought to be kept. It should be mentioned that everyone who cared about the end of the world being on time died in the ensuing disaster. That was Thursday. On Friday those who had somehow survived came out of their hiding places to figure out what to do next.

---

It turned out that they had both lived in New Brook for their entire lives, but Ryan and Jim had never met until the world ended. Jim said it was better that way, since they didn’t have any kind of history to get in the way of their trust now. Ryan chalked it up to the fact that Jim looked like he was about six years older than him—so they wouldn’t have met in school—and let it go.

“I always figured it would be a zombie apocalypse,” Jim said as they walked down the otherwise deserted Main Street. He almost sounded disappointed. “You know, the virus that causes zombiism would rise up in a really big urban area and spread from there to take over the entire world.” They passed town hall, which had been reduced to a pile of rubble. The post office next to it appeared to be fine. “Surviving that actually requires some skill, and it would be interesting. But this? Things just fell apart. That’s not interesting.”

“Forgive me if I don’t care,” Ryan retorted. He’d looked for his parents before he left what remained of his house, but he hadn’t found them. If their bodies were buried underneath the broken glass and wood and concrete, he wasn’t mentally or physically strong enough to dig them out. They hadn’t answered when he called, so they were probably dead. Everyone he knew was probably dead. There was no telling how many people in the world had lived, but in New Brook Jim and Ryan seemed to be the only ones. Jim had messy, dark blond hair
and bright blue eyes, like Ryan. If there had been anyone else around to see them, that person might have mistaken them for brothers.

Jim stopped walking. They were standing in front of the drugstore now, its fallen ceiling clearly visible through the shattered windows. “We should get out of here,” he said. “We should grab what we can from the grocery store, find a working car and just drive away from this town.”

Ryan raised an eyebrow. “That’s stealing.”

“It’s the end of the world, man. Do you wanna sit here and wait to die?”

“We don’t know that the whole world is like this.”

Jim smirked. “And we won’t know unless we go to find out. So, are you coming or not? If it is the end of the world, and we have to repopulate it, we’re going to at least have to find some girls.”

“I’m fifteen.”

“So? Younger guys have… ah, just forget it. You don’t have a choice anymore. You’re coming with me.”

Ryan had always wanted to go on a road trip besides the ones he and his parents took every year to his grandparents’ house in Missouri, but he had always assumed that he would be going on a cross-country trip with his friends after they graduated from high school. He’d certainly never imagined himself traveling twenty miles past the speed limit down an empty highway, digging through a collection of salvaged CDs while the driver, a guy he’d only met that morning, studied the road signs. The truck they’d found wasn’t in the best condition and smelled like cigarette smoke, but the tank was full and the keys were in the ignition. Ryan didn’t want to think too hard about the previous owner, who had probably lived in the caved-in house in front of the barn where they discovered the truck. He also didn’t want to think about what they would do when they ran out of gas, so he concentrated on finding music to listen to. He had already checked all of the radio stations; there was nothing but static.

“How about Linkin Park?”

“We are on a road trip at the end of the world, Ryan. We do not need to listen to an emo-angst-fest, no matter how awesome the intros are. What else is there?”

“Early Britney Spears, some boy band stuff, and all three High School Musical soundtracks.”

Jim’s mouth dropped open and he turned to look at Ryan.

“You have got to be kidding me.”

“Watch the road!” Ryan cried. He got an eye-roll from Jim for his trouble, but the older male did face forward again.

“Whatever; put the Linkin Park in.”

Ryan did so, allowing the music to be the only sound in the truck (beside the noise of the truck’s engine) for a few minutes.

“Where are we going?” he asked as the third song started and they passed the fifth exit since leaving New Brook.

Jim looked thoughtful. “I don’t know yet. How do you feel about New York City?”

“That’s over a thousand miles away. We don’t even know what kind of gas mileage this truck gets. What are we going to do when we’re almost out of gas?”

“Find a station and get some more. Relax, kid.”

“You do know that the gas pumps won’t work unless you pay for the gas, right?”

“I have a credit card if we need it. You never answered my question about the Big Apple.”

“It’s okay, I guess.” Ryan crossed his arms and stared out the passenger-side window.

Jim tried to smile, but it seemed his enthusiasm was waning.
with the setting sun. Not that Ryan cared. “New York City it is, then.”

They pulled over on to the side of the road around midnight when Jim declared he needed sleep if they didn’t want to crash. They could have taken one of the exits and found a motel or hotel or something, maybe. It wouldn’t have been difficult to take a set of keys or a keycard from behind the front desk, assuming there was no one there. They didn’t really discuss the options. Jim just pulled over, parked, and turned off the ignition. He fell asleep quickly, lending credence to his claim of exhaustion, but Ryan stayed awake.

Ryan wondered, if he fell asleep, whether he would wake up in the truck next to Jim or in his own bed, roused by the sound of his alarm clock. Was this all a dream? Would he wake up and find out that it was Thursday again, and the world hadn’t ended yet? Would he go downstairs, following the smell of bacon, and find his mom fixing breakfast? Would his dad be leaving for work? Would he go down to the bus stop to find his neighbor, Anna, waiting for him? Would he get his test back in Geometry with the usual red “B” at the top? Would he fall asleep again, looking forward to the next day because it was one day closer to the weekend?

Or had that all been the dream, and the only reality was the guy snoring next to him? Ryan was getting less sure by the minute. Eventually he did fall asleep, and when he woke up Jim had already started driving again. It was Saturday.

---

By some odd miracle or design, they didn’t hit traffic until New Jersey. There weren’t any people; just cars stopped on the road. Finally Jim couldn’t navigate around the cars and they had to stop too. They sat still for a moment.

“We could walk until there’s space to drive again, and pick out a new ride.” Even as Jim said it, both of them knew they weren’t going to do that. Perhaps Ryan should have known from the very beginning that they weren’t going to New York City. It was probably better that way. He’d been there once on a special school trip in eighth grade, and he hadn’t really liked it then.

Jim sighed. “This sucks. I shouldn’t be sitting in traffic that’s never going to move with a fifteen year-old who barely talks to me except to argue. Right about now I should be taking my girlfriend out to dinner or to a movie.” He put his hands on the wheel again, his grip tighter than it was when driving. “I went to her house. Hers and my best friend’s. Leo’s was completely caved in. Sarah’s was still standing, but the windows were all broken. There wasn’t anyone there.” He rested his forehead on the steering wheel, and Ryan didn’t know what to say. Jim took a deep breath before speaking again.

“This just really sucks, you know? For all that we can tell at this point, we’re the last two people left this side of America. Our families and everyone we ever knew is gone. I thought it was so weird, when we met, that I couldn’t even remember seeing you in town. Maybe I just didn’t pay enough attention.”

“I never saw you either,” Ryan pointed out. “So maybe neither of us was paying attention.”

Jim let out a short, humorless laugh. “Maybe.” He lifted his head suddenly and turned the key in the ignition, starting the engine again. “Screw this,” Jim said firmly. “Screw New York City. I’m just going to find the nearest beach.”

---

It took nearly half an hour for Jim to maneuver around the abandoned cars in reverse, and by the time they found the nearest beach the sun was starting to go down on the second day after the world ended. Ryan wondered if it really had been the whole world, or just their part of it. He decided it wouldn’t make much of a difference.
The two young men, the teenager and the twenty-one year old, stood on the beach and looked out at the Atlantic Ocean. Ryan hadn’t been to the beach in years, but he had heard that the ones on the west coast were nicer. Maybe after this they would go find out. Assuming that Jim’s credit card and the truck and even Jim lasted that long.

“You want to know why I would have preferred a zombie apocalypse?” Jim asked after what felt like an hour of the two of them just standing there. Ryan turned toward him, offering silent acquiescence. It wouldn’t have done much good to say no anyway.

Jim kept staring at the ocean. “A zombie apocalypse would have been easier, in a lot of ways. With zombies, you know what’s happening. You have a good idea of what to expect. You know where the people have gone and you can actually fight it. Maybe not forever, but you can fight. This… people are just gone. We’re left to wonder why and to figure out what we’re going to do, but this isn’t really fighting. We’re just existing, and I hate that. We don’t have any kind of purpose anymore.”

Ryan shifted his weight from his left foot to his right. “We have to survive. That’s a purpose.”

Jim laughed, the same short, derisive sound he’d made in the truck after Ryan suggested that neither of them had paid attention before the world ended. “This isn’t surviving, kid.” He hadn’t called Ryan that since the first thing they’d said to each other on Friday morning. He’d asked if Ryan was okay then. Ryan had never bothered to ask if Jim was okay. “Surviving requires something working against you, something that doesn’t want you to continue with your life or whatever. The worst thing we’ve come up against was some traffic.”

Ryan looked turned back toward the ocean. He realized that he hadn’t heard any birds since Thursday, before things changed. Even now, when there should have been tons of seagulls screaming all around them, there was only the sound of the waves. He opened his mouth to say something about it, but that wasn’t what came out. Instead he asked, “What would you have done if it had been zombies?”

Jim smiled slightly; for the first time it was an honest smile instead of a smirk.
"Thou hast blasted me! Thou hast filled my veins with poison! Thou hast made me as hateful, as ugly, as loathsome and deadly a creature as thyself—a world’s wonder of hideous monstrosity!... My father, wherefore dist thou inflict this miserable doom upon thy child?"

(Nathaniel Hawthorne, Rappaccini’s Daughter)

The sweetest aromas linger with the morning breeze, telling of the luscious red roses from which they came—what a beautiful, deceiving scent. The vibrant colors, the daffodil accented pathways, the stone fountains, all tainted with an underlying evil, a foreshadowing of sin—and of poison.

I am Beatrice, harboring the vilest of lethal poisons within my every vein, my every heart beat, destined to live in solitude because of a choice I could not make for myself. My kiss is deadly, my touch alone enough to infect anything not raised within the walls of my father’s garden—these walls that imprison me.

I am Rappaccini’s daughter: my mind, my bones, my very essence instilled and diluted with lies and insincerity. Each purple rhododendron, each yellow tulip, each white magnolia blooms with dishonest intentions; each grown by my father, each a pathetic attempt at pure beauty. For every petal, every stem, and every leaf is laced with malice, making even his flowers bold symbols for his own hypocrisy.

I am Rappaccini’s daughter, and you, dear father, are my poison.
Her scarlet letter’s name is Aiden, and he will be one year old in April. She carries him to church each Sunday, absorbing messages of grace and redemption, coupled with side-long glances from prim wives sitting inside their frilly hats and white lace gloves.

In the wee hours of the morning, when he cries, she goes to him, kisses away his baby tears, and changes his soiled diaper with her bare and weary hands, believing in a Jesus who died for whores and their bastard children.
when stream looks like steam
and a giant castle may walk through your front door
eating childrens candy who wear bunny suits and cry
that the star spangled banner flies too far
and then becomes a bird too with wings
of gold and black and the rest of the story never ends because
they forgot the period so you always wonder
if ice cream makes it into the story or
a dragon shows up for dinner with mister badger
who likes to spell his name to the full extent of the
last probable cause in the mathematics equation he ate
for dinner which has now happened twice in this poem
that looks somewhat like the state of missouri above this line
and that little dwarf will never go home because
home is where the heart is and he doesn't have a heart
or at least pretends not to which will greatly offend
the good people of missouri who quite clearly state in their
writ of mandamus that their hearts are as big as texas
but texas doesn't care not one bit.
SarahJane Bennett & Eye-ball My Verbal Tie-Dye

How zestless is our earth without the color of sound!
Shall I speak a rainbow?
Would you like me to sing you a painting?
Our world lacks the blushes of our words.
I shall speak colorful language.
I will show you the tie-dye of my song.
But you must be the one
to discover the secret of my Mona Lisa sound.
Could I handle the brightness of your sweet nothings?
Would the explosion of “I love you” blind your beady eyes?
If you think too hard, your colors shall sound gray.
If you cry too broken, you’ll paint the sky blue.
Don’t shout so large!
For your red letters shield my view
of Mozart’s masterpiece.
Look at this lullaby.
Eye-ball my verbal tie-dye.

Kathryn Barber & The Price of Silence

Beautiful golden curls,
bouncing, flowing down;
a glittering tiara rests upon her head,
dressed in a big white princess gown.
We slide the garter up her leg;
remove the gloves from where they lay,
smile for the camera, big gorgeous smiles,
try to be happy—it’s her wedding day.
It’s almost time to march now,
and as I follow her up the stairs,
I gather up my dress, smile my best,
I want to tell her—oh but I don’t dare.
I stand to her left at the front of the church,
still biting my tongue, still not saying a word.
Playing over and over through my head are
all the silent warnings I never spoke, and she never heard.
Sunlight streams in through the stained glass pictures,
and he pulls back her veil, leans in with a kiss.
Maybe if I’d said something, anything—it wouldn’t have ended like this.
It’s two in the morning when my doorbell rings,
her weeping a haunting sound in a still night.
“He’s gone, he’s gone,” she keeps repeating;
“He left me for good tonight.”
And so, we pack it all away: the gloves, the shoes, the gown,
along with eight bridesmaids’ dresses of red,
and I too, pay the cost for what she lost
because of what I never said.
My song is played clearest when pianos are drowning.
Immersion holds dearest my infinite plea.
I am who I will be with black and white sounding,
a muted expression that’s covered in sea.

The sun streaming through, on ivory plays
while my hands take the keys drenched in black.
I long to transpose; and the higher notes crave.
I secretly wonder what’s holding them back.

Then one fine day, each note holding tight
breaks the shell placed on its skin.
You no longer hear it, bewildered by sight
for my song is felt deep within.

There’s no longer difference in light streaking through
and the keys once held in their place.
No, now we are one, I’m changing my view
of the water which shattered my vase.

I forgot all about my bed and my stove
to which I no longer belong.
No one in sight but I’m far from alone
while the ivory plays on with my song.
Not in the sun, but while it rains will they come.
No, they dare not offer face to royal rays.
Seeping through silent echoes, calling out,
one by one,
Hazy horrors saved for long, lazy days.

Yes, all seven have their hot hell to raise.

Loyally leads a lion,
his stare a frightening affair.
Reeking royal remains, bearing stubborn untamed,
kept neat in his long, golden hair.

Next,
Running her nails around his rear flank,
croons a rawly erotic, jeweled gypsy.
Swinging hips yearning to churn; licking lips longing to learn
sipping remedies for losing one's tipsy.
This hell harlet craves heavy hands in her hair
and body heat blazing, slicing through crispy air.
So she summons some handomes with her siren lilt of laughter,
giving rise amid strong thighs, with cigarettes after.

Marching after gypsy, drool dripping, tongues a’flicking,
our armed army follows, each polished sheek to shine.
With greedy guns pointing, beware their wicked warning,
That brave decree, “STAND BACK! THE GIRL IS MINE!”

Next,
Slithering their chaos in a torment tinted fashion,
green lizards sprint everywhere to and fro.

Singly stopping at random, kicking tricks, singing anthems;
a symphonized staggering of stages and shows.
Yet when each little lizard is left in loathed lime light,
camouflaged cautiously in such a crawling sight,
each stops to glare, at all that's there:
the soldier’s guns, the lion's stare,
and then their green spreads everywhere.
“How unfair! We want our share!”

But shady sloth, sighing so sarcastic, claims not to care to care.
His lazy saunter shows that his lazy self knows he's not going anywhere.
So he keeps sleep walking along behind his aviator shades,
Smoking sips of sunset sweet from his pink lemonade.

Behind him walks a wretched pig, dragging a muddy leash,
sow is sniffing down the soft sidelines, searching for a feast.
One can hear her boar belly roar, commanding her to eat,
so she turns around, and on the ground, she spies a mouse with cheese.
Gobble up goes the cheddar, while the mouse screeches a squeek,
but pig feels non the better, off she sets to search more treats.

Leaving last in line, that mouse,
brewing rage through his meek, round frame.
Once again this was the very last straw!
One again he is going insane!

Yes, these are the rain cloud creatures,
passing by with their painted parade.
Screaming, “Rise from your bleacher and come be our leader!
With your baton, a wand, to conduct our charade!”

Yes, Jane Bennett’s “Deadly Parade” employs vivid imagery and an imaginative concept to bring a unique, imaginative concept to life on the stage. The poem captures the essence of a parade, but with a dark twist, as it portrays a group of seven seven individuals who emerge from the shadows, each with their own distinctive characteristics and roles. The poem’s use of imagery, such as the use of insects, lizards, and a pig, creates a surreal, almost dream-like atmosphere that draws the reader in and keeps them engaged. The text is rich with symbols and metaphors, such as the lion and the gypsy, that add depth and layers to the poem. Overall, “Deadly Parade” is a powerful and thought-provoking work of literature that masterfully blends the poetic and the fantastical.
Eight petals fall to the ground, shivering with chill as the cool gust kisses them with its pale lips. The rosy color that lines their cheeks fades in the descent. Faint puffs are sighed from blades of grass as the sojourners lightly rest on the earth, and the breeze once more tickles the trees, enticing the others to leap. Rustling a laugh, the trees strip naked. Hiding nothing, they lay bare their bodies to greet heaven as it descends in white purity, the touch of God so cold it’s hot. In creaking slumber, the timber sleepers dream in visions of green.
Daniel Aisenbrey doesn’t submit stuff to things anymore. Now he just does stuff to the things that people submit so that things get published. Can haz diploma?

David Austin

Kathryn Barber is from southwest Virginia and just got back from a semester in London. She hopes to be an editor in NYC.

Sarah Jane Bennett is a newbie writer from Nashville, TN. She is a Music major. She was born with a creative spirit.

Bethany Brown is a senior Creative Writing/Media Ministry major. She feels called to help others by sharing her faith through writing. Bethany is a missionary kid and learned to love God and writing in East Africa, which influences her writing significantly. She is thankful to God for the ability and calling to write, and her parents Doug and Mary Sue Brown for the unconditional encouragement in writing and in life.

Rachelle Burgett is a senior Graphic Design/Photography major. She has two awesome kids who inspire her to keep going every day. Never stop trying and you will never stop succeeding.

Julie Burton is a junior graphic design major from Cincinnati, Ohio. She loves the south, but hates sweet tea. She enjoys shopping, singing, dancing, and laughing.
**Destry Cloud** is a senior Theater and English (Creative Writing emph.) dual major. He has had a good four years at Carson-Newman, performing in numerous theatrical productions, working with the Bonner Scholars, and creating both wonderfully delicate and intensely violent poems and stories. He hopes to follow his dreams and become a professional actor and/or writer. He enjoys eating ice cream and hunting dragons in his spare time, and is terribly afraid of whales and roller coasters.

**Emily Davis** is from Lebanon, Virginia and is a junior majoring in English Creative Writing. She loves to read and write stories and wants to become an editor one day. “If something can be read without effort, alot of effort has gone into writing it.” Enrique Poncera

**Elli Edwards** is a Photography major from Kissimmee, Florida.

**Kyrie Gordon** doesn’t claim a hometown due to her background as a Navy brat. She spends much of her free time either talking to dragons or somewhere near the Romulan Neutral Zone. She hopes to one day rule a library while she works on her novels.

**Gretchen Hill** is a victory lap Senior who loves Jesus and never wants to grow up… especially “if growing up means it would be beneath her dignity to climb a tree.”

**Cory Jones** is a starving artist-senior-drawer-graphic designer-person-robot who has been critically ill with senioritis since his freshman year. He is currently engaged to a wonderful fiancé and in desperate need of a job that can utilize his artistic talents. Feel free to call 678 907 3456 with any job offers or freelance work.

**Kevin McArthur** is a Sophomore Photography major known around campus for his hair.

**Megan McSwain** is currently a sophomore double majoring in Photography and Cross Cultural Sociology. She has an affinity for babies and sushi. After completing her degrees at Carson-Newman, she dreams of living in a hut, somewhere in Africa, eating the former and taking photos of the latter.

**Wyatt Shelton Miles IV** was born in Danville, Virginia in the late 1980s. He began writing (terrible) poetry near the beginning of the millennium and has recently shown some modest improvements. Wyatt graduated from the School of Religion in December of 2009. After graduation he took some time to get closer to nature before continuing on to seminary. He is currently living off the map among 100 breeder cattle in Hell Bend, Virginia.

**Kayla Beth Moore** is a shalom-seeking-student-of-the-world-sophomore writer, who loves the way that words fall like rain drops into her brain and water little-baby-idea seeds. You’re really going to love her books someday.

**Caitlin Nichols** is a Junior Middle Grades major with a History emphasis and a genuine passion for children. My family has always been a sincere supporter of my art and inspires both my poetry and paintings. Oh, and I play a mean air-drum to Bruce Springsteen’s “Born to Run”, Max Weinberg has nothing on me.

**Katelyn Pardue** is a junior majoring in Consumer Services. She enjoys writing, cooking, catering, and the outdoors. She is currently working on a poetry manuscript entitled, “Time Says People Fly.”
Contributors’ Notes

**Rai Schatz** is a Freshman double-major for Photography and Psychology. She is interested in giving the common world a new, interesting perspective. She likes to express this through macro and angled photos.

**Markie Secrest** is a freshman photography major from Cambridge, Ohio.

**Vanessa Smith** is a sophomore Photo major from Paducah, Kentucky.

**Hannah Williams** hails from Seymour, Tennessee and is a sophomore double major in Graphic Design and Literature and is minoring in missions. She hopes to pursue a career in Graphic Design after graduation. She loves books, movies, and Dupont.

**Olivia Wood** is a junior Creative Writing and Photography major with a bullying fascination for all things wild, weird, and wonderful.