



# THE LAMP POST

## UNMASKED

"And we know that in all things  
God works for the good of those  
who love him, who have been  
called according to His purpose."

*Romans 8.28*

These are trying times, so sit down  
and relax with over 40 creative  
submissions to enjoy.

### FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE:

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Charlie Frye  
Ian Galey  
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Taylor Hunnicutt  
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Lillian Queen  
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# 2020



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PHOTO CREDITS

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**Dr. Elizabeth Juckett**  
Faculty Advisor

Dr. Juckett has greatly enjoyed serving as advising professor for The Lamp Post 2020 production team. The creative spirit and collegiality of this year's editors have inspired and blessed her.

**Caprice Coffey**  
Fiction Editor

Caprice is a freshman at Montreat College and is majoring in English with a concentration in Creative Writing. She enjoys reading books, writing stories, and making art.



**Charlie Frye**  
Poetry and Spoken Word Editor

Charlie is a recent transfer to Montreat, an English major with a Creative Writing concentration, and a poetry editor for this year's edition of The Lamp Post. Charlie also enjoys writing fantasy novels, reading a good book, drawing, or catching up on a tv show.



**Taylor Hunnicutt**  
Fiction Editor

Taylor is one of the fiction editors for the Lamp Post 2020 and is a senior History major with a minor in English, who will be graduating in May. He hopes to become a published author once graduated, and has two novel manuscripts written and finished, with many more ideas and drafts that he hopes to write and finish as well.



# MEET THE EDITORS

**Holly Stevens**  
Visual Arts Editor

Holly is a junior at Montreat College, studying Communications with a concentration in Journalism and a minor in Biology. She is a part of the cross country and track and field team at Montreat and has the pleasure of serving as the Visual Arts editor for this year's edition of the Lamp Post.



**Emily Williams**  
Fiction Editor

Emily is a junior at Montreat who majors in English with a concentration in Creative Writing. This is her second year on staff for The Lamp Post, which she enjoys working with as a lover of all things art. She writes novels and poetry in her free time and hopes to become a published author.



**RuKiya Wylie**  
Nonfiction Editor

RuKiya is a sophomore at Montreat who majors in Communications with a concentration in Journalism. This is her first year as an editor for The Lamp Post, but she was an editor for her high school's newspaper. In her spare time, she enjoys reading, having coffee with friends, and collaging.



**Christian Young**  
Layout and Design Editor

Christian is a junior at Montreat and is a Communications major/English minor, with an emphasis in Rublic relations. In his spare time he enjoys reading and writing fiction novels, short prose, and poetry, as well as computer programming, graphic design, and game theory/design.





## Homicide on the Homestead

by Robert Crain, writing for the Associated Press

Wed. 4/20

•

VALENCIA, California—Two people were found dead this Saturday when authorities responded to a 9-1-1 call from a farm thirty minutes outside of the city, and are suspected to be victims of homicide. The deceased couple was identified as Mr. and Mrs. John Presser, the dual owners of Valencia Vintage, one of the largest vineyards in the Central Valley which has supplied much of the San Fernando Valley with wine for over forty years. They leave behind their six-year-old son Timmy and their two-year-old daughter Samantha, who will both be cared for by neighbors until relatives arrive from out-of-state to claim guardianship.

The bodies were discovered when Timmy ventured over to the neighbor’s house and told them his parents wouldn’t wake up; the neighbors called the police immediately after they rushed over and found the pair unconscious at the dinner table. Emergency medical services responded within fifteen minutes, but they were pronounced dead on arrival, with the estimated time of death being 45 minutes earlier. The neighbors declined to comment, and asked that their names be kept out of all press surrounding the deaths.

The coroner’s office repeatedly declined to comment on the nature of the deaths until their investigation concluded Monday evening; speaking with reporters the next day, the chief of police stated that the cause of death for both victims was determined to be a severe allergic reaction caused by the presence of sesame seeds in the couple’s last meal. The police chief specified that the amount of seeds present in the victims’ stomachs is the reason why the case has been classified as a homicide, as suicide has been ruled out and the number was too great for any highly-allergic person to consciously consume. The police are interviewing the limited number of available witnesses to try to discover who

may have had access to the victims’ food supply within the last 24 hours, but report few promising leads.

Anyone who may have seen or heard anything is asked to call the Valencia County Sheriff’s Department, and may find their phone number on [sheriff.valcounty.ca.gov](http://sheriff.valcounty.ca.gov).

UPDATE, 4/23—The story of a double homicide in Valencia County continues to unfold as investigators discover evidence of physical and emotional child abuse in the Presser household. A witness has come forward (who requested to remain anonymous) and claimed that during a rare visit to Valencia Vintage, they witnessed Grace Presser “harshly scolding” Timmy over what seemed to be “practically nothing—a small mistake, forgetting to introduce himself to me when I arrived.” The witness went on to say that Mrs. Presser excused his behavior as “intolerable” and apologized several times for his “extremely rude” behavior. To their credit, the witness contacted Child Protective Services that afternoon, and although an investigation was conducted, no verifiable evidence of abuse was discovered at that time.

The police have refused to elaborate on the information revealed by their investigation into possible abuse in the Presser home, but have said there is enough evidence to “start considering anyone with close ties to the family as possible suspects.”

The Associated Press will continue to keep our readers updated as this story develops.

## Life and Death

by Kathryn Frye

•

She is Life, and I am Death, and we are watching the young man from a few feet away. He sits on a splintered bench, its dedication plaque rusted beyond recognition, and leans forward

with his elbows on his knees and his phone held in both hands. If he were to look up from the screen, he would see nothing but the determined bustle of campus foot traffic, hear nothing but the wind, the crunch of orange leaves, and the faint music emanating from the dangling earbuds of a passersby. He doesn’t notice us. They never do.

“Almost makes you feel bad for him,” Life whispers, perhaps to herself.

“What does?” I say.

“This.” She waves her hand at the boy. Her face is as serious as she can make it, but she never looks serious. She looks young and exuberant, and the golden light that emanates from her always reflects in the sparkle of her eyes. She always looks like she’s on the verge of glorious laughter. Even now, as she shakes her head at the young man. “He doesn’t know what’s coming.”

“They never do.”

\*\*\*

The boy’s name is Eli. Eli, the college student, Eli the loving son, Eli the devoted boyfriend. Eli, who lives in a small apartment off campus and who works in his spare time at a thrift store, selling the discarded wares of humans come before him. Eli does not yet know it, but he is about to start thinking about Life and Death very soon.

\*\*\*

I walk beside Eli, Life trailing behind us. The boy has a bounce to his steps, and a smile splits his face in two. Every few steps, he bounds out of his way to crunch a leaf into the sidewalk.

“It’s coming,” Life whispers.

Eli stops in his tracks, retrieving a phone from his pocket. He grins at the name on the screen. Ava Lindley. Eli writes back, *meet me at the library in an hour?*

I watch him start to put his phone away, then frown as it rings. “Hey Mom,” he says, holding it up to his ear. His frown only deepens. A hand covers his mouth. “Oh no. Oh no. Tell Mom I’ll be right there.”

Eli hangs up and he sprints down the sidewalk, veering off towards the parking lot.

Life smiles at me, her head cocked to the side like a child’s. “I’ll follow him.”

I nod, feeling the dread knot in my stomach. “And I have somewhere else to be.”

\*\*\*

Later, I find Life in a hospital room, sitting on the edge of a bed. There lies Eli’s mom, eyes closed, monitor beeping with every heartbeat. “I wonder what human guilt feels like,” I say.

Life looks up at me, a ghost of a smile crossing her lips. She points a finger at Eli. “Like him, silly.”

He holds his mom’s hand in both of his. “Please don’t die,” he whispers. “I still need you.”

Eli has no idea. No idea.

\*\*\*

Much is unknown to the human mind. Their thoughts, so limited, so wondrous, have no concept of the divine or the damned. That is how I am able to pass through their ranks unseen. That is how Life, as the setting sun signals the time, is able to lay her hand on the mother’s chest, causing her to gasp and bolt awake.

Eli throws his arms around her neck, crying. I look down at my hands, at the lifeblood still dripping off of them despite the countless times I’ve wiped them on my robe. Thousands and thousands of souls have stained my hands red, and I remember each and every one.

“I love making them so happy,” Life giggles.

“Only you are able to.”

She cocks her head at me. “What’s it like to kill someone?”

I watch Eli text Ava Lindley, a text she’ll never receive. The last text she ever received was from Eli. *Wanna meet in the library?* She was still reading his message when she stepped out onto the crosswalk. The oncoming traffic never saw her coming.

If Eli doesn’t know what human guilt is now, he will very soon.

He was lucky though. Ava Lindley’s soul was light in my arms. He will be joining her when his time comes.

“I don’t know. What’s it like to bring someone

# FICTION



to life?”

Her brows crease together. “I don’t know why I’m so beloved and you are so hated.”

“You’re the prison sentence and I am the release,” I say. “You represent all the pain, the torture and senselessness, and yet they cling to you all the same. Why am I so hated?” I look to Eli, still smiling at his mother’s return. “Because I am unknown, and humans do so hate the unknown.”

Eli’s phone rings, delivering the message of his beloved’s doom. Life just laughs. She always laughs. She is Life, and I am Death. I never have a reason to laugh.

**New Year’s Eve in Mivian**  
by Caprice Coffey

Mivian, New Voxis was filled to the brim with people. Elves and Faeries lined the streets. New Year’s Eve had attracted crowds from far and wide to the Skyward State. Faerie trams had worked overtime to accommodate the flood of tourists that flowed in from across the world. News

channels captured the crowd at the height of their zeal. Wind and Water Elves blew snow into the streets as a famous band sung on stage. A group of Faeries, in their smaller form, had formed a dancing circle. It would only be another half hour before the Renewal began.

Dany made sure to avoid the dancers as she slowly waded through the crowd. Snow landed in her dark auburn hair, some strands of which were pinned away from her face. Since there were so many mortal tourists, it was hard to weave through the dense hoard of people. Everyone’s focus was either on the band or the gold and silver orb that slowly descended toward the top of Voxis Tower. No one paid attention to a mortal girl on her way to a quiet coffee shop.

Dany eventually made it to Revelyn Avenue. She heard several groups of Elves and Faeries singing in Ingati, the ancient language of the Wielders. Dany knew enough to pick out a few words and phrases, but she was nowhere near fluent. She made a final push through the crowd until she found Dusty Rose Café. She stopped



short when she saw something peculiar.

Sitting in the coffee shop, was an Elf.

Curious, Dany thought. She approached the shop, unable to stop herself from staring. His hair was dark and long enough to hide his face. He was reading a book, his body still and focused. She stared for a moment, but he didn’t look up from his book. Dany shook her head and walked inside.

The barista, a Faerie with layered, turquoise hair, met Dany at the counter. Her transparent wings glowed periwinkle in the dim light of the shop. Dany scanned the menu.

“What can I get for you?” the barista asked. Her accent wasn’t as thick as most Faeries that Dany had met.

“Um... I’ll have a rose garden mocha with a shot of relaxation tonic, please,” Dany requested. She took a seat at the counter next to the Elf. After losing a battle with her curiosity, she turned to him. “Shouldn’t you be out there, celebrating?”

It took a moment for the Elf to realize she had spoken. She watched as he emerged from the book. He turned his eyes to her, the glare from the lights reflecting off his glasses. He seemed about her age. Dany could tell his mind was still in whatever world the pages had taken him to.

“What?” he said shyly.

“You’re not worried about missing the Renewal?” she asked.

“I don’t know.” He shrugged. Dany was taken aback. Not just by his apathy, but at his lack of an Ingati accent. In fact, his accent was human. Dany guessed Midwestern, but kept listening. “It’s never really been my thing. It’s just tradition, right?”

“I guess,” Dany sighed. The barista handed her the coffee, and she paused and let the cup warm her hands before taking a sip. She tried to reign in her curiosity, but let out a deep breath and turned back to the Elf. “You’re not from around here,” she guessed, “are you?”

“No.” His eyes were on his coffee. “I moved here a few months ago.”

“Where are you from?” Dany asked, having given up on refusing her curiosity.

“Brisfield, Kansas,” he answered. Dany had been right about his accent.

“Kansas,” she repeated. She held out her hand to him. “I’m Dany.”

“Rune,” he said as he took her hand for a brief moment. She glanced at the open book.

“So what are you-”

A terrified scream cut her question short. Dany and Rune jumped from their seats and rushed to the door. She shoved open the door and followed the source of the scream. The Faeries who had formed the dancing circle, human-sized now, were scolding a group of humans. In the middle of them lay an unconscious human man.

“That’s what happens when you step in a Faerie Circle!” a female Faerie fumed, her accent thick and lilted.

“Didn’t his mum ever teach him not to step in a dancin’ ring?” a fair-haired male added. “This kinda magic makes humans trip like they’re on acid! Everybody knows that!”

“If you knew it would happen, why did you do it in the middle of the street?” a mortal woman asked furiously. She knelt down to attend to the unconscious man. Dany could see that his eyes were glazed and distant. Whatever he was seeing, it was not of this world.

“It’s a Renewal, for crying out loud!” the female retorted. Dany rolled her eyes and made her way back towards the coffee shop. Rune followed close behind her.

“What was that about?” he asked. “Does that happen often?”

“Only a tourist would be stupid enough to be lured by a Faerie circle,” Dany huffed.

“If it’s dangerous, why do they do it out in the open like that?”

“Like she said, it’s tradition.”

“What’s the point of tradition if it hurts people?”

Dany blinked. She hadn’t expected that, especially coming from an Elf. “I... I never thought about it like that.”

Their conversation continued into the night.



They traded stories and opinions until they heard the crowd’s cries unify into a single voice. They were counting down.

Dany and Rune rushed outside to join the crowd. They watched and counted down as the orb finally reached the top of Voxis Tower. Cheers rang through the crowd as magic - pure, perfect magic - emerged from the orb and filled the air of New Voxis.

Nurture or Nature?

by Robert Crain, writing for the Associated Press  
Fri. 4/29

VALENCIA, California—The Valencia County Sheriff’s Department is now considering Timmy Presser as their lead suspect in the Valencia Vintage double homicide following the revelation that there were no visitors to the vineyard in the week leading up to the deaths of John and Grace Presser, suspected child abusers and habitual recluses who died from simultaneous allergic reactions to sesame seeds. The seeds, we can now confirm, were mixed into the vegan chili that the family was having for dinner that night, but only in the bowls used by John and Grace—pointing to a targeted attack against the two individuals. We were lucky enough to get an interview with Det. Jim Childan, one of the lead investigators on this case, who was able to shed some light on what’s been going on behind the scenes.

*[Editor’s note: this transcript of the interview has been shortened to fit the space allotted. We did our best to preserve the integrity of the content, and made sure we did not leave out any important information.]*

INTERVIEWER: First off, I’d like to thank you for agreeing to this interview.

CHILDAN: Well, as you know, we usually don’t discuss specifics of a case until after an arrest has been made and the case has gone to trial. It’s standard police procedure, after all. But in this case, our chief thought it was important to get ahead of the media curve, to make sure there is no unjust reaction against individuals in the

community going forward.

INTERVIEWER: Why is that a concern?

CHILDAN: Mostly because our lead suspect is a six-year-old child. There have been many instances of children who have been demonized in the public eye once they’ve been accused of crimes. We want to make sure that doesn’t happen here, both in the case of Timmy Presser as well as anyone else who might be involved in the future. In fact, given the circumstances of this case, there’s a very good chance the case will be dismissed once it reaches court; however, that’s not going to stop us from conducting this investigation until every loose thread is tied up.

INTERVIEWER: Could you please explain why the case would be dismissed?

CHILDAN: Well, the facts are currently revealing a narrative of almost constant abuse to us at the Valencia County Sheriff’s Department, and I think if we can say beyond a reasonable doubt that Timmy did put those sesame seeds in his parents’ bowls, then it was almost certainly in self-defense. But that’s neither my call nor yours to make; that’s for a judge and jury to decide.

INTERVIEWER: Fair enough. Is there anything you can tell us about how it happened?

CHILDAN: Our forensic scientists and lab technicians have worked around the clock this last week to determine an accurate series of events; in conjunction, of course, with what little testimony we could get from Timmy and Samantha. From what we can tell, Mrs. Presser finished cooking the chili around 5.45 PM, and divided the meal into separate portions for the entire family. She then left the bowls unattended by the windowsill while she went to call everyone to come and eat; it’s at that point that we believe Timmy reached through the low window and dropped a handful of sesame seeds into the two largest bowls.

INTERVIEWER: Can you say if Timmy has an alibi?

CHILDAN: He said that he was playing outside with his “friends,” the small flock of neighborhood crows, and he said that’s the reason why he took so

long to come back inside. When asked the question if he had gone up to the windowsill, he didn’t respond in either the affirmative or the negative. I can’t say any more than that.

INTERVIEWER: It sounds like this took a bit of cunning; can you say if Timmy is even capable, mentally, of concocting such a plan?

CHILDAN: That’s one of the angles we’re still investigating, because our experts have generally said that Timmy is in a bit of a grey area in the development of his brain...it’s possible he could have planned it, but not fully understood the consequences. That’s another reason why he’ll probably receive a light sentence if this goes to court, but beyond that the only thing I’ll say is that he definitely knew that his entire family was deathly allergic to legumes.

INTERVIEWER: How is that?

CHILDAN: Well, about a year and a half ago the family was having a picnic in one of their vineyards, and it just so happened that some lima beans had been left in their picnicking spot by some wild birds. Somehow, Mrs. Presser came into contact with the beans, and the oil on their skin sent her into anaphylactic shock.

INTERVIEWER: And because of that incident, you claim that Timmy was aware of his family’s allergies?

CHILDAN: It’s definitely plausible, but to be honest we’re just looking to find any way to show that Timmy did this—not out of some maligned spite for the kid, but because if he didn’t then that means there was someone else present that we haven’t been able to find.

INTERVIEWER: I think that’s enough for now. Thank you for your time, Det. Childan.

*To read the full interview, please visit us online at valenciareporter.org.*

The Sky and the Lamp Lighter

by Lillian Queen

Quietly, not wanting to be discovered, the sky wept. He mourned the loss of the light. Unlike

most nights, when the moon illuminated the world below, it was dark, far too dark for the sky to sleep. The hazy, indifferent clouds had smothered the moon and stars so that the sky was blinded by the murk. He had been weeping for only a few minutes when out of the gloom came a light. Too small to be the sun, too warm to be the moon, and too restless to be a star. It wandered about and eventually it was joined by another and another and another until an entire row of tiny lights were dancing about in their own place. The sky peered down through its big, sad eyes and asked to himself, “what are these things?”

“Why, these are lamps,” replied a voice. The sky could not tell from where it came.

“what are lamps?” asked the sky, “why do they shiver and hiss at me?”

“They hiss because they do not like your rain and they shiver because of your wind.”

“oh,” replied the sky and because he was no longer alone in the dark his tears slowed to a trickle and then a mist and the lamps became still. It was strange for the sky to see lights below, instead of above.

“Are these lamps, as you say, a new invention?” asked the sky to the unknown voice.

“Oh no, you never knew them though because the moon was so bright.”

“Will they stay forever?” the sky inquired.

“Just as the sun goes to sleep in the night, these will go to sleep in the morning and then come again tomorrow night.”

“who are they for?” asked the sky yawning a great yawn.

“I do not know; I light them and then in a few hours I will put them to sleep.” And then after a pause, “perhaps they are here to keep you company on cloudy nights.”

“well whatever their purpose, I am glad of them,” said the sky as he drifted to sleep.

“As am I,” said the voice, and he whistled as he walked home.

From then on, whenever the night sky was sad because he could not find the moon the voice came



to keep him company and light the lamps. They both watched as the little flames danced about and the sky listened to the voice explain how the sun and the little lamps were not so very different after all, only in their size.

**Vengeance at Valencia Vintage**  
**by Robert Crain, writing for the Associated Press**  
**Thurs. 5/15**

VALENCIA, California—Police have today concluded their month-long investigation into the deaths of John and Grace Presser at Valencia Vintage by placing the victims’ six-year-old son Timmy under arrest, who will be held under custody of the San Fernando Valley Office of Child Protective Services as he awaits trial in Valencia County Courthouse next month. Police allege that Timmy gathered sesame seeds from the ground outside his house, and reached through an open window to deposit them into the bowls his parents would later be eating from; comments from the police indicate that even though they believe this to be the case, the question of whether or not Timmy was fully aware of the consequences of his actions is still very much in doubt.

The motive appears to be years of child abuse on the part of Timmy’s parents, John and Grace Presser. While the police have declined to provide any specific details, citing Timmy and his sister Samantha’s right to privacy, they stated in an earlier press conference that “physical...emotional... whatever you can imagine, it probably happened to them.”

While the investigation has repeatedly confirmed that the only people present at the time of death were John, Grace, Timmy, and Samantha, several figures in both the professional and public spheres have announced their belief in Timmy’s innocence. Psychologists connected to the case

have debated whether or not Timmy has the cognitive maturity to plan such a crime, connecting cause and effect; if he did, they also wonder if he was fully aware of the severity of death when he

placed the seeds in the bowl, or if he was acting purely on impulse.

With Timmy’s trial set for the first of July, the police have said they are thoroughly investigating every possibility within this case, and do not desire to see justice slighted: “If [Timmy] did it, then it was surely a product of his circumstances, and the court will undoubtedly treat him fairly,” said the chief when asked his opinion of the case. “If not, then I don’t want my department to be responsible for ruining this young man’s life. So I’m going to make sure that we do our part to see the law upheld.”

Members of the extended Presser family have asked that the trial be reserved from broadcast over television, but have permitted a limited number of reporters to attend.

**Whodunit?**  
**by Christian Young**

First of all, a small disclaimer: aside from the locations of Valencia, the Central Valley, and the San Fernando Valley in California, all people, places, organizations and events in this series of short stories are purely fictional. Any relation to actual people, places, organizations and events is mostly coincidental.

With that out of the way, I’ll ask you the following: after reading *Homicide on the Homestead*, *Nurture or Nature?*, and *Vengeance in Valencia Vintage*, how did John and Grace Presser die? Did little Timmy murder his parents, or were more mysterious forces at play?

There is a definite answer to those questions, but I’m not going to say here what it is. Instead, you’ll have to figure out what the police missed when conducting their investigation (and possibly do some research of your own, if by some miracle you’re that invested in the story) and ask me *who has done it*. If you can’t find me in person, shoot me an email at [cyoung1@montreat.edu](mailto:cyoung1@montreat.edu). If you get it right...I don’t know, I’m not going to offer a prize or anything, so let’s just say you get bragging rights

for solving a stupid puzzle where the author didn’t give enough clues to what the answer was. Sound fair? To help you out, I’ll give you three clues:

1. *They definitely died in the manner that the police discovered.*
2. *Timmy was definitely outside with his weird crow friends at the time when the bowls were left unattended.*
3. *The fact that the stories are separate from each other bears some significance to the story. I won’t say what that significance is.*

There you go. Three clues is all you get. Have fun! (Oh, and if I made it too hard by not providing enough clues...sorry.)

**Untitled Short Fiction**  
**by Kali Zakariasen**

I have been young, and now I am old. The trail of every aged one tells a story. This is mine.

The event of my birth took place on a stormy Montana day. In the serene shelter of the vintage barn settled in the heart of Pleasant Grace Farm, my humble entrance into this labyrinth of a world occurred. I vividly recall the faint musty scent of the old cedar wood that surrounded me. The warmth radiating over me as my beautiful mother gently breathed is still a wonderful reminiscence. Her muscles rippled elegantly beneath snow white hair and her neck arched gracefully as she bent down to clean my new, frangible skin.

In that tender moment, with the sweet hay beneath my tiny hooves and the soft glow of the hanging lantern gently swaying in the corner of our stall, I knew I was loved. The lifelong bond between my mother and I had begun.

My first months of growing up were blissful and pure. Although in my early years I didn’t appropriately appreciate my youth, thinking back I relish those carefree hours of grazing on the flowing slopes with my mother. Each of those first precious days was spent in the sunny pastures of the farm, just Mother and I. We soaked in the crystal clear spring waters and munched on the

tender, green apples that hung plentifully from nearby trees for myriads of hours. Each night, nestled together and encircled by the bond of heat we shared, I knew the heavenly feeling of peace. I can’t say I have experienced anything more comforting than being lulled to sleep by my mother’s steady heartbeat, silky coat, and radiating warmth. Mother was superior to any scary thing. Ask me what fear was then, and I would have no description for you.

After a series of sunny days, one can always expect a rainstorm to be in the forecast. All too suddenly, my fairytale life was to quickly vanish. I will never forget the day my mother and I were removed from our beloved home and herded into a trailer loaded with all sorts of other horses. I was far too young to know what was happening, but my mother knew. She had been through this sort of thing when she was young. We were being sent to another state to be sold to trainers and breeders.

Being extremely excited about a new adventure, I was not the least bit nervous or saddened to leave our home. To me, a trip with Mother to a faraway place sounded like a lovely idea. The only thing that worried me was the strange look I happened to catch in my mother’s eye. Was it a look of expectancy? Was it fear? Perhaps despair. When







I glanced her way once more, however, she was watching the trees whiz by outside our window. I quickly pushed my ponderings aside and began to enjoy myself again.

The road trip lasted many hours. After what seemed an eternity, we finally came to a stop. I was thrilled to exit that box on four wheels and gulp in the fresh air with brio. After a while, some husky men with beards and shiny leather gloves approached and led my mother and me into a sizeable corral. They provided us some food and water. It was delicious! I realized I had not eaten anything nor drunk a drop of water since the previous evening.

After a time, one man inquired of another, “What do ya suppose we oughta do with da litta ones?”

His companion replied, “We’ll put ‘em up in the train that’s headin’ for Kentuk’ and his momma, that snowy mare over yonder, will go on further in the trailer and I reckon we’ll get a good sum for her.

I did not know where this place, “Kentuk” was, but I was quite sure I didn’t desire to travel there. Worst yet, was my mother going to be taken from me?

That very night Mother told me the awful news of what the men had decided. It was true, I thought with terror. Imagining the possibility of being apart from my mum sent cold chills down my tail. How could I live without my mother’s comforting body to snuggle up against at night? What would I do without her gently nudging me to awaken in the morning?

Lying awake through the silence of that night,

I doubted sleep’s existence. My mind whirled with a multitude of thoughts, all swirling about uncontrollably. Why were these men taking my mother away? When were they taking her and where? Thoughts continually bounced to and fro in my head at a disturbingly painful rate. I lied down dizzily, my mother’s painful words echoing again and again. After a long time, I fell into a restless sleep.

The next morning I awoke to my mother’s nervous grunting. I knew what it meant. When the men came to take me I ducked behind mom, hoping they wouldn’t see me. I pressed hard into her side and shut my eyes tightly. I could hear her heart thumping wildly inside. Oh, the wonderful security of her touch and the comfort of her body! I desired to stay by her and never leave. Suddenly, I felt startling pressure followed by the abrupt jerk of those cold, leather hands around my neck. I kicked and thrashed violently. I snorted and whinnied with all my might. I knew deep down inside that I could not resist the powerful human being. My mother nudged me softly as a sign to surrender. I obeyed.

The man forced a rope over my nose and around my chest and dragged me towards a separate trailer. As we struggled down the dusty road to the trailer, my mind went blank. I felt numb all over. I simply could not imagine a world without my mother. She had been a part of every day of my life and now she had vanished from my sight. I was headed for the unknown destination of “Kentuk” alone.

Upon entering the trailer, I was engulfed by the anguished cries of other youngsters who were also separated from their mother’s that day. The stress of my circumstances combined with the suffocating heat of the sun beating down on our small trailer was too much for me to take. Exhausted, I let my head hang limply and gave into my heavy eyelids. Soon everything became quiet and all that could be heard was the distant roar of an engine and the sorrowful sounds of the motherless.

## Changed Hair, Changed Life

by Emily Wells

•

Coco Chanel once said, “A woman who cuts her hair is about to change her life.” I don’t know if I’ve ever had a haircut that was life changing, but I’ve definitely had a few chops that were the result of life changes. Let me lay the groundwork with a brief explanation of my hair history. As a child I had long, auburn waves that won me the Olan Mills “Picture Child of the Month” spot on the wall at the photography studio at Sears.

Enter puberty.

At about fifth grade, my hair went from soft waves, to frizzy curls that would make a poodle jealous. Under the wayward direction of the family hairstylist, my mother and I made the decision to chop off about a foot of my hair and layer it. This was a mistake. Without the length to weigh it down, I had a constant rim of puffy, oily brown locks around my acne prone face all the time. Combined with glasses that were too small for my face, my yearbook picture for 5<sup>th</sup> through 9<sup>th</sup> grade could have given pre-makeover Mia Thermopolis a strong run for her money.

Flash forward to my freshman year of college. I spent seven years following the fifth grade chop growing my hair back out, applying gel to it, straightening it to death, and hiding every picture from my middle school years where the sun don’t shine. Prior to college, every day of my life had been the same. The lack of action in my first seventeen years finally caught up to me when I came to Montreat. I was suddenly three hundred miles from home with people I didn’t know in a place that was beautiful yet strange to me. The extracurricular activities I had looked forward to were a flop. Making friends was more of a challenge than I expected. And the “no really, we’re just friends” relationship I had brought to

school with me from home was fading fast. I was lonely, sad, and in desperate need of a pick-me-up. And I needed it fast.

It was a fateful afternoon in late October when my roommate, Chelsea, and I decided we needed our hair trimmed. Somehow we had escaped practice for an afternoon and saw the sudden free time as our only opportunity to do the deed. I had been itching for a new cut for a few weeks and had picked out a style on Pinterest that I thought was just darling. But, we were on a budget and trying to be thrifty, so we hopped in Chelsea’s Honda and drove ourselves to Master Cuts in the Asheville Mall, determined to leave as changed women.

If a person is looking for a haircut that is more than a one inch trim, they should not go to a Master Cuts in the mall to do so. If a person is looking for a haircut, they should not let a 30-something year old woman with uneven purple and red streaks in her hair reach for the scissors. I was halfway through the appointment when I realized that I had made a mistake. I don’t remember the stylist’s name; it was something to the effect of Shauna or Tiffany. I showed Shauna/Tiffany the desired Pinterest picture. She said “Girl, yes! That will look great on you!” I said “Great! Let’s do it!” Shauna/Tiffany promptly turned my chair around (so that I was not facing the mirror) and began snip-snipping away.

Fifteen minutes later, Shauna/Tiffany spun me around to face the mirror on the wall. She was grinning from ear to ear. I was stunned. It was not the cut from the picture I had showed her. In fact, it wasn’t the hair style I had described at all. She had (incorrectly) used a brush to work the tangles out of my hair. Let it be known: you cannot use a brush on curly-haired folk. Therefore, it was extremely bushy and fell about halfway down my neck rather than a few inches below my shoulders. I blinked hot tears out of my eyes as I said “Wow,

# NONFICTION



that’s great.” Chelsea, on the other hand, who had wisely asked for a mere few inches to be taken off her long, straight, jet-black locks walked out practically unchanged other than slight sympathy for her unfortunate roommate.

I spent the next few months straightening my hair until it grew longer or putting it in a bun if there was not time for the hour-long straightening process. I was discouraged and bitter that nothing in my life was going my way, not even a haircut. But as my hair grew, so did I. I learned to be content in my new home. I joined a team that became my family. I found my own faith and made friendships that existed beneath surface level. The unfortunate hair cut was certainly an inconvenience, but also a very fitting metaphor for my first year of life on my own. And now, whenever I feel the urge to make a drastic change in my life, much more thought than schedule availability is considered. So, maybe Coco was onto something. Whenever you see a girl with changed hair, check on her. Maybe her life is changing too.

**Intelligence.**  
**by Christian Young**

I was part of a conversation about the Declaration of Independence recently, and (as it always seems to be) one of the key topics of discussion was the catch phrase of the document: “all men are created Equal.” Naturally, everyone was able to agree that this isn’t true from a physical perspective; no matter how hard I train, I’ll never be able to beat Usain Bolt in a race. Our bodies aren’t identical, and everyone agreed that this wasn’t the Declaration’s intended meaning. But then came the natural extension of this thought process: what about intelligence? On one hand, since our brains are a physical part of our bodies, is everyone unequal in intelligence as well? Or does the presence of different modalities of intelligence mean that it all “balances out” on a neurologic scale?

Well, I’m no brain surgeon, so I’m most

definitely not going to take a definitive stance here and now. I want you to actually like this piece, after all. No, instead we’re going to talk about corvids, and how frighteningly intelligent they are.

In case anyone confused ‘corvids’ with the scientific designation of the virus that created a global pandemic in the early months of 2020, I can safely assure you that they are two different things. Corvids are a family of hyper-intelligent birds that include (among other species) crows, ravens, rooks, jackdaws, jays, magpies, and nutcrackers, and all of these birds share a key trait: proportional to other species, their brains are abnormally large. In other words, they’re smart. Wicked smart. Neuroscientists and psychologists have actually estimated that corvids operate on the same intelligence level as a seven-year-old human child—for comparison, your standard dog is about as smart as a two- or three-year old child. At first, that might not seem like much: seven year olds aren’t scary at all, at least not as much as adult humans can be. But what I learned last week will make you think twice whenever you walk past a murder of crows. We’re talking Hitchcock-esque levels of scary here. Brace yourself.

One of the key demonstrators of the intelligence of corvids is their ability to use tools to solve problems. I read about two prominent examples of this: in one case, corvids were observed dropping hard-to-crack nuts on the road to let cars run over them and crack them open, revealing that they have a basic understanding of mass or weight (a heavy thing can crack a nut easier than a lightweight thing). In the other case, researchers tested a classic Aesopian fable about a crow that dropped pebbles into a pitcher of water to raise the water level, allowing it to eat food that was floating on the surface; when presented with this exact same scenario, the crows behaved exactly as they had in the fable. Whether or not Aesop was observing a crow when he came up with the fable is unknown; but the fact remains that they can understand buoyancy, water displacement and, once again, mass (the birds chose heavier rocks

because they would raise the water level more). It’s also been said that corvids understand analogies, but I have no idea what kind of experiment proved this, so I’m going to relegate it to a single sentence at the end of this paragraph.

Ready for a slightly more scary corvid fact? They have the ability to recognize faces, and apparently understand that human beings are individuals that each need to be approached in their own unique way. If one person harms or offends a corvid, the bird will recognize that person and ‘scold’ them in the future. If you befriend a corvid, on the other hand, they’re liable to take a page out of the housecat’s playbook and bring you little “gifts.”

So what? Even if you hurt a corvid, that doesn’t mean the entire flock will attack you on sight a la Hitchcock’s *The Birds*; actually, wait, never mind, that can happen. See, another point in the ‘intelligence of corvids’ category comes from their ability to communicate and share information with each other...and yes, that information includes which humans to avoid, befriend, or attack. Scientists conducted an experiment (man, they’re pretty busy, aren’t they) where people in unique-looking masks captured corvids from a certain part of Seattle, tagged them, and released them. A month later, using the tags to track the



birds’ movements, they sent out teams of people wearing the masks to different areas of the city, and noticed how the birds targeted the individuals in the masks for “scolding,” that is, stalking and cawing aggressively. The kicker? None of the scolding birds were tagged, meaning the tagged corvids shared the information about what the masks looked like, from which the un-tagged birds were able to recognize the masks. Nervous yet?

Don’t worry, though...most of the things you read in fiction about creepy corvids are just that: fiction. Like Poe’s *The Raven*, which sees a haunting raven perch quoth-ing(?) “nevermore” at Poe. That’s one hundred percent fiction, except for the part about the raven talking. That’s one hundred percent true. Corvids, like parrots and macaws, are able to mimic human speech patterns. And wouldn’t you know it, but ravens are one of the prominent species of corvids. This doesn’t mean they understand human speech, per se...but it does mean a raven could land on your windowsill, say “nevermore,” and then (when you shoo him away) go tell his buddies that you’re a jerk.

In all honesty, the reason I’m writing this is not to scare you; not even remotely. I just think that it’s so easy to get caught up in moot debates that we miss the glory of God’s creation; look at





this, people! God created an entire family of birds that are so smart they appear in classic literature countless times, back when people still thought “bird-brain” was an insult (well, it kinda still is, but birds in general are pretty smart compared to other mammals). If anything, I really want you, the reader, to take a minute after this piece to stop and think of everything we could achieve if we could communicate with corvids...spies, couriers, messengers that would never be suspected. What if we were able to make a computer that responded to caws? What would a seven-year-old use it for? (That might not be that impressive, my dad let me play on his iPhone when I was seven and all I did was play a game called “Blocks Classic.” Still, how cool would it be to see a crow playing a video game?)

And with that, I’ll leave you to your thoughts. Next time you see a crow...think twice before throwing a rock at it (you’re not that kind of person, I know, it’s just a phrase).

**That’ll Never Happen to Mommy and Daddy**  
**Anonymous**

“But don’t worry girls, that’ll never happen to Mommy and Daddy,” your mother reassures you and your little sister with a warm smile and crinkled eyes. It was your best friend’s parents. Something peculiar was happening to them. They were getting...divorced? A strange, incomprehensible word to your 6-year-old self. So the night your mother heard the news, after story-time in your little sister’s Noah’s Ark themed bedroom (a nightly ritual) she endeavors to explain the concept to the two of you. No doubt your best friend had tried to explain it to you earlier that day as well, but as you can imagine, a conversation between two 6-year-olds about divorce may not have been the most comprehensive. Or who knows? Perhaps the best way for a 6-year-old to understand such a heavy topic is indeed from the perspective of a like-minded individual: another 6-year-old. Either

way, your mother explains the concept to you, and that night as she tucks you in, you feel comforted. You won’t have to worry about spending a single night at your father’s house separated from your teddy bear that you accidentally left behind at your mother’s house: a terrible fate that had befallen your best friend. Your mother lingers in the doorway and says goodnight as she turns off your light. You hug your teddy bear and close your eyes, burying your face into the soft cocoon of pillows and blankets piled atop your bed. A few minutes later your father comes in. Your eyes are heavy with sleep, so you pretend not to be awake. Smoothing your hair, he kisses you goodnight, and as he turns to leave you smile to yourself. You hug your teddy bear tighter and drift off to dreamland. All is right in the world.

“Would you stop screaming at me about this, Mark?! There’s nothing I can do about it at the moment! Our daughter is upstairs, delirious with fever!” Your mother’s exasperated voice rises up the stairs, reaching every corner of the house. It pierces your ears. You stumble down the dark hallway towards your parents’ bedroom, teddy bear in hand. Their voices are too loud. Why are they yelling in your ear? But wow, a daughter delirious with fever. That doesn’t sound good. You reach your parents’ bedroom after nearly falling over several times as you staggered down the hallway. Oh. You’re the daughter delirious with fever. Why aren’t your parents in their bedroom? Oh, that’s right. Their voices were coming from downstairs. Or was it upstairs? Either way, you can still hear their yelling, but it’s muffled by the pounding of your head. Why is the world spinning? You collapse on their bed, and their sheets feel cool against your burning forehead. You can’t remember how long you’ve been there, or how long they’ve been yelling. Did they start yesterday? Last year? Have they always been yelling? You don’t think so. Your body is so warm with fever that within moments the sheets are no longer cool to the touch. Darn. You’ll just have to stumble down the stairs into the war zone and ask your mother for some more cool

sheets. Which way are the stairs again? Oh well. Never mind. Oh good, they’ve stopped yelling. It was hurting your head.

“Honey, do you have the car keys?” Your friend’s father asks from the driver’s seat.

“No. I’m sorry, dear. I thought you had grabbed them.” Their mother answers from the passenger seat. Oh no... Here come the deep sighs, the grumbling, and the yelling. The “I can’t believe you don’t have them. I told you to get them. Can’t you ever remember to do anything I ask of you?”

“No. I thought you had them,” Brace yourselves, here it comes... “but that’s okay, honey. I’ll go get them.” He pats his wife’s hand and jumps out of the car to retrieve the keys. What? You know that’s not the right response. Where is the grumbling, the yelling? Well, this is the first and only time you’ve been around your friend’s parents and seen them interact. Maybe this is an unusual occurrence. You look to your friend to see if the same shock that you feel is registered upon their face. Nope. Perfectly normal. Hmm. Maybe they’re just shy. After all, your parents don’t usually yell around your friends either. But they also never act like this around your friends. They act hospitable to one another, friendly at best. Maybe the more times you’re around your friend’s parents, the more they’ll feel comfortable acting normal around you. Acting how your parents act.

“Hey,” you whisper to your friend, gesturing at their parents as their father jumps back in the car with keys in hand, “do your parents ever argue?”

“Uh, no?” They reply, their brows furrowing, and a confused look crossing their face. Hmm, odd. Their father starts the car, and off you all go on a day trip. When they drop you off at your house that night, you pull into the driveway and you’re all laughing. You step out of the car, and thank them for the best time you’ve had in a while. As you say it you realize that you hadn’t said it just to be polite. It was true. It was the best time you’d had in a while. Waving, with a grin you can’t seem to wipe off of your face, you watch them drive away. As you replay the day’s events in your mind,



you realize that you can't recall a single moment in which the parents argued or raised their voices. Not one. You walk up your driveway, humming a tune to yourself, the grin still plastered to your face. A whole day without parents yelling; that's a record. As you start up the front steps, you hear noises coming from inside. You stop humming. The noises are muffled, because you haven't opened the door yet, but they are still distinguishable. Your grin suddenly disappears from your face. You sigh and sit down on the steps, covering your ears to block out the yelling. Never mind; today's not a record.

"I can't keep doing this, Cate!" You hear your father yell. You're old enough now, and have seen enough other families and couples interact to realize that this isn't normal. But it's your normal. This is your family, and you just have to accept that. It's bad this time, though. Their voices are nearly hoarse, they've been yelling so much. You decided to take refuge in your room when it started, quietly putting your dish in the sink and slipping upstairs, lending a blind eye and a deaf ear to the situation.

Everything's fine, you're just going upstairs because you want to. You have a sock drawer to organize, or a desk to tidy up. Hours may have passed since you shut yourself in your bedroom; your clock ran out of battery, so you don't know. All you know is that your parents are still screaming at the top of their lungs, and you now have a very neat sock drawer; you've organized and reorganized it five times by now. Your socks might revolt and run away if you organized them again so you look around your room for something else to occupy yourself with. You pick up your teddy bear, and gaze at him for a moment. Why? Why can't your parents get along? Why can they turn any situation into something to fight about? Why is your family like this? You ask your teddy bear. He doesn't answer, so you hurl him across your room, taking the brunt of your confusion, sadness, and anger as he hits the wall at full force. They're still yelling. Your face crumples and hot tears begin to roll down your cheeks. You run to retrieve your teddy bear, and clutch him tightly to your chest. You're sorry, you tell him through sobs. He seems to accept the apology. You

cry as you cling to him, a tangible representation of your childhood before your home was a war zone. Oh, how you wish you could go back to those early days of peace. Finally, you hear the front door slam, feel the house shake from the force, and then there's nothing but unwavering silence. Usually silence is peaceful, relieving; but not this silence. You hear your father's truck start up, and rush to the window just in time to see him drive away. Your mother walks down the hallway, and starts up the steps. Without even seeing her, you'd know the sound of her gentle footsteps and soft gait anywhere. You wipe your eyes with your sleeve; she can't know you've been crying. She knocks quietly on your door, and then your sister's. You both crack your doors open just enough to peek out and make sure the coast is clear. She's the only one standing there, so you both emerge.

"I'm so sorry, girls." She musters a small smile, but her eyes forget to join in. They look tired. The yelling has gotten so bad she doesn't even bother to hide it anymore. Not that she ever successfully hid it, but she at least tried to.

"It's okay, Mommy," you reassure her, a sad smile crossing your face. You hope your eyes aren't giving away the fact that you'd just been crying. "Where did Daddy go?"

"I'm not sure, honey. He just left," she said with a sigh. You never figure out exactly where he went. He did come back though, hours later, and for some inexplicable reason he came bearing gifts. Two plastic trash cans. A red one for your sister, and a blue one for you. Good; you need one of those for your bedroom. You only wish that you could ball up your feelings like a wad of notebook paper and throw them in the trash can. You try. It doesn't work. Great present, Dad.

"Daddy, I'm not feeling so well," you tell your father as he stirs the contents of a pot on the stove. "I don't think I'll be able to eat dinner."

"Okay, honey. Just go sit on the red couch though. Mommy and Daddy need to talk to you and your sister," he says, gesturing to the intended couch. You'd bet anyone a hundred dollars that it's

the most comfortable one upon which they've ever sat. Nothing bad could ever happen when you're curled up on it. The four of you gather on the couch, and your father starts to speak.

"So girls, as you've noticed, Mommy and Daddy haven't really been getting along too well lately." He continues, and you can't believe it. Your sister bursts into tears as he explains, but you just sit in shock. She asks a thousand questions, each one broken as she chokes back sobs. Your mother asks you if you have any questions that your sister hasn't already asked, but you just sit in silence. They tell you not to worry, that it's not your fault. They reassure you that they still love you and your sister more than anything. But that's not what you want to hear, because you already know that. What you want to hear is what you don't know anymore: that they still love each other. But they don't say that.

You squeeze your eyes shut, and shake your head. It can't be real. This is your family. They grumble, and they fight, and they yell, but they're your family. How will you be a family after this? You squeeze your eyes shut tighter, and shake your head harder. You pinch yourself, knowing that this is just a terrible dream you must awake from. It's not working. But it must be a dream, it must be. She promised. Your mother promised that this would never happen to Mommy and Daddy. But that evening, on that red couch, you realize it just did.

### The Tree that I Can't See by Duncan Small

A tree, taller and mightier than any other in the small but great forest. As I climb up this wooden giant, I listen to the sound of tires against the pavement and planes warming up their engines. Suddenly I hear my name being called from far away. I look down, feeling like I'm on top of the world, and see my mom standing there telling me it's time to go. My grandparents have lived in the same house for most of the childhood I can





remember, right off a busy road and next to the local airport. In between the road and the airport is a small forest, if not a patch of trees. Among these small trees there was a pine, bigger and more prominent than the rest. As a child I was in awe of this skyscraper of a tree and any chance I could get I would be in that tree. In the years to follow I still loved that tree, but it seemed to get smaller as I got bigger, and as I moved on to more extreme adventures, the tree seemed like less of a thrill. Now I'm in college and the tree has been chopped down. I like to think that the tree is a metaphor for the older I got and the more I grew, the smaller the tree got, and now that I've moved on to a new chapter in my life the tree has too.

When I was 8 years old my grandparents moved down to Tennessee from New York and they moved into a house right by the airport and about 2 minutes down the road from my house. Just about every day I would go down to their house with my mom we would play cards, crack jokes, eat candy, and my favorite part, explore the woods. For the most part the woods just consisted of small pines and lots of shrubs, but in the middle, there was one tree to rule them all. This pine was bigger around than I was tall and it was the best part of my day getting to climb that tree. I would bring all my friends over to show them this incredible tree and we would climb to the top and watch the planes fly off into the sky. At the end we would always have snacks and drinks to sit around and enjoy after a long day of climbing. For the longest time I didn't get bored of the tree. Even though it was the same old thing I still couldn't fathom a tree so large.

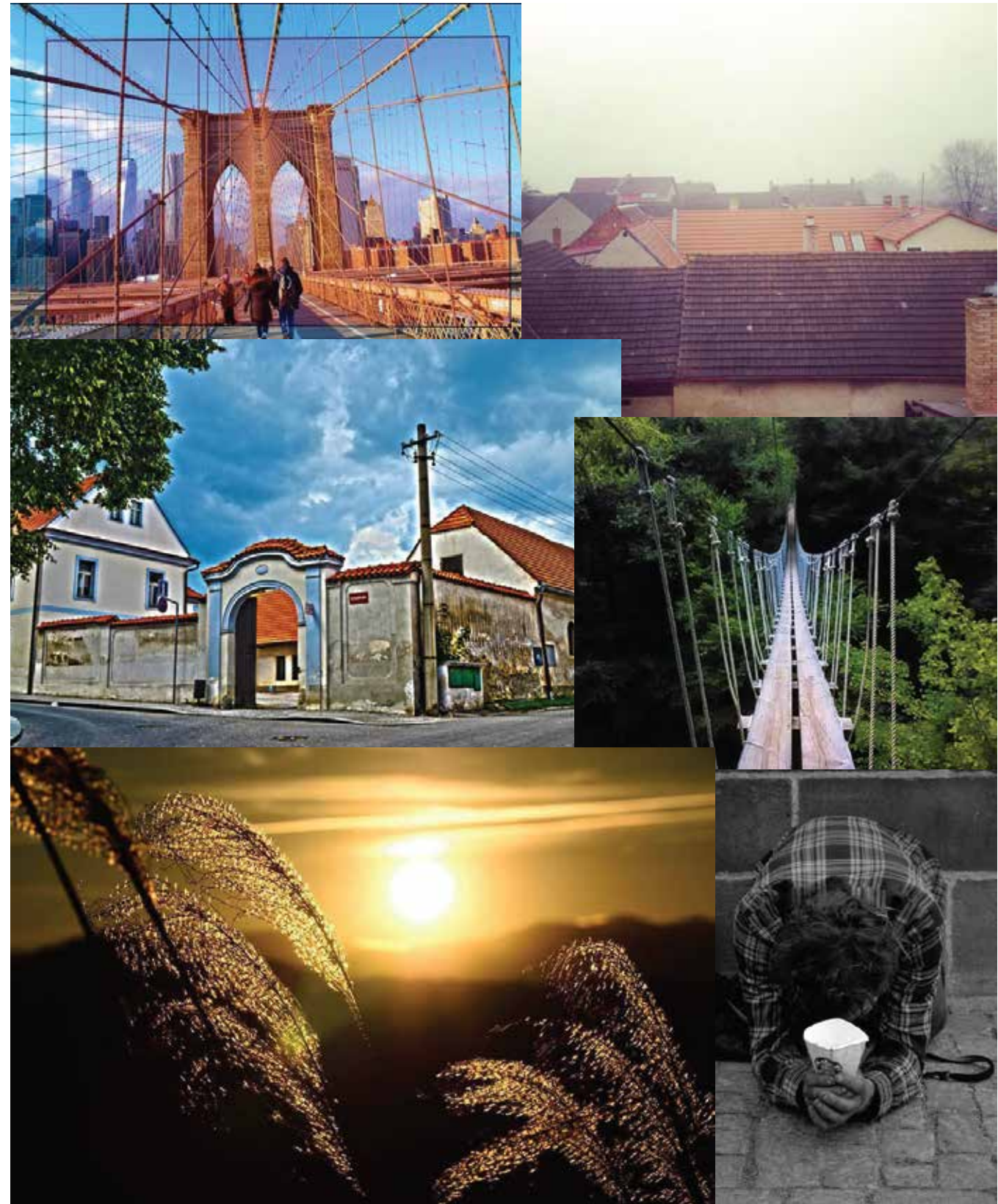
As I grew older, taller, and a little larger, I climbed the tree less, for it just didn't seem as big anymore and to me, it had lost that spark of being so magnificent. I would still go out and climb up into it every once in a while, to watch the planes and think about the good old days, but for the most part I had gone on to bigger and better things. By the time I had turned 16 I had gone scuba diving in Florida, backpacking across New Mexico, and

dog sledding in Minnesota, so the tree looked like just a tree to me. November of 2018 is the last time I went to that tree just because I hadn't in so long and I had so many memories there. I didn't realize that it was going to be my last time in that tree and now I regret not appreciating it more.

I'm now 18 years old and living in a dorm. Sometimes I reminisce about that tree and I think about the friends I've bonded with there and the memories I've made there. I think about when my friend broke his arm falling out of that tree and our parents told us not to climb it, I think about climbing up there to watch the sunset, and I think about the peace I felt up in that tree without any worries in the world. Sadly, over this summer the tree was cut down because a new road is being built in its place. To me that tree was a big part of my childhood, and throughout the stages of my life it was there when I needed it. I have moved on to college and the tree has moved on to mulch. When I needed it most it was there for me, and that tree was my childhood. I can't imagine what my life would've been like if it weren't for that tree even though there were others like it, even some in my backyard. For some reason that tree just had a spark to it that no others could compare to.

"In three words I can sum up everything I have learned about life: it goes on." This quote from Robert Frost explains simply yet well my relationship to the tree. As I grew older, wiser, and taller, I started to forget about the tree and my life went on. The tree got older and slowly started dying, and eventually was chopped down, but I grew and my life went on. I have had some incredible adventures in my life, some dangerous, and some just fun, but if it weren't for that tree, I don't think I would've ever gotten out of my box and become the person I am today.

# VISUAL ARTS



Photos by Sarka Cibulkova, taken in locales such as Prague, the Czech Republic, and various U.S. states.

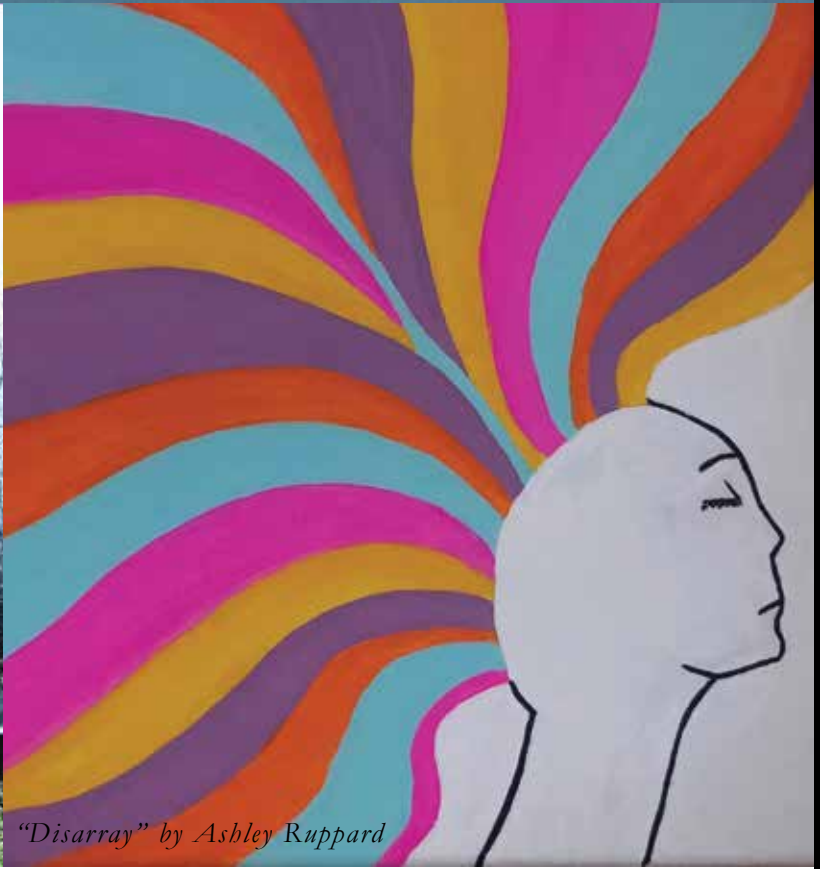




*"Sliver Moon" by Emily Wells*



*"Sunday Morning" by Taylor Hunnicutt*

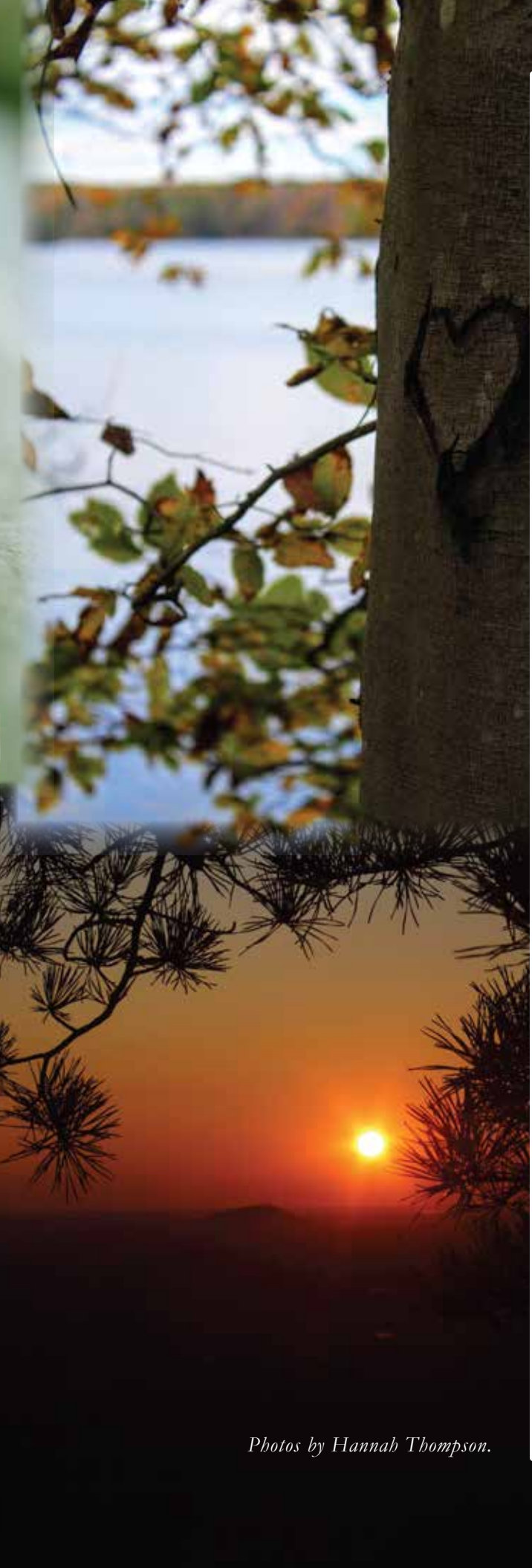


*"Disarray" by Ashley Ruppard*



*Photos by Lillian Queen.  
Left: "Melting Snow"  
Right: "Ruins"  
Bottom: "Ocean and Cliff"*





*Photos by Hannah Thompson.*



*Untitled painting by Ashley Ruppard.*

*"Sunrays" by Lillian Queen.*



*"See What I See" by Kali Zakariasen.*



# POETRY

## Acolyte

by Danielle Schroeder

•

There are some souls who inherently long for the sacred.

There is religion in the councils of constellations and the seas on lunar planes.

And perhaps worship of the humane is only understood by those who seek it. Acolytes understand that chapels reside in open spaces of a sought deity. The ravens that cry thrones and kingdoms perch upon electric wires, blessing the understood with understanding cries. And fanfares and overtures manifest in cacophonous climaxes that cadence through hair down to the fingertips.

The peaks of gentle giant mountains are the altars upon which we bow in devotion; it is the only

physical location upon which lying prostrate into the mineral soil is effective because the clouds

are prostrate next to you.

And yet there are religions that can't be taught or advertised. Or even spoken about. The unspoken silences are the steeples that a pilgrim travels to find. Look for the stained-glass windows; colored stories that sabotage all manners of dull normalcy.

There is divine in the devotion.

## The Ablution of the Sea

by Ian Galey

•

I

“Forgiven father, pale and still,  
Absolve me—child of loathe and dread—  
From every sin of mind and will

Committed ‘gainst thy soul now fled  
Away to heaven, hell, or state  
Of place unnamed, unthought, alone.  
Though injured by thy swelling hate  
That stripped my mother to the bone,

Forgiv’n I say is now thy slate  
But far too many moments late.”  
I bowed my head and turned aside  
As four bleak men the coffer eased  
Into a hollow near the tide  
With which the ocean grabbed and seized  
The lowly body bit by bit  
With every push and pull of day  
It stole each every part unfit  
Till nothing in that coffer lay.  
Beneath the waves, the time obit,  
This carcass sank into the pit.  
And silent churned that massive pond  
The keeper of a broken bond:  
A heart still longing to respond.

II

Ten years I watched along that beach  
The swooning of the sun to keep  
A memory of the day the breach  
Enlarged beyond the sea too deep  
And marched against the sordid song  
Ablution ringing in deaf ears,  
Deaf ears full-stuffed with every wrong,  
Unwashed, unchecked by starving tears.  
But then amidst the shifting throng  
I heard a slushing scrape along  
The seabed like a grating prong.

Betwixt the shadow of the sea  
And dark against the ocean floor  
With crooked arms and bended knee  
He came and crawled and sludged ashore,  
A slimy skell of marshy green  
With milky eyes and purpled lips  
And stale black hairs that oozed between  
His shoulders and his slinking hips.  
What horrid smell, what wretched sheen,  
What putrid, septic, rancid scene!

A gleeful wrinkle split his face;  
In sated gait he came apace  
As if to snuff my ounce of grace.

III

“Decrepit creature, stay thy ground!  
The living, only, live on land.  
Away, be quick; confound, confound!  
The sea, its waves, thy form demand.”  
His head aslant, a question stirred  
From hoary, muddy, gargled throat,  
“My daughter, daughter mine,” he slurred,  
“Can you in features see this dote,  
This rotten, clamed, besotted third  
Of fathered visage fiends preferred?”  
“In all the world can this be true?  
Ten years since when I saw him last  
I see my father’s features through  
This monstrous mimic of the past.  
O creature of the ocean shrine  
Can you be he who’s buried hence?”  
“Dear daughter, yea, here is my sign:  
Forgive me all my vile offence.  
My heart is here, forever thine.”  
“Receive thy pardon father mine.”  
He veered and sank into the spray

Returning in his coffer lay  
And rests there peaceful to this day.

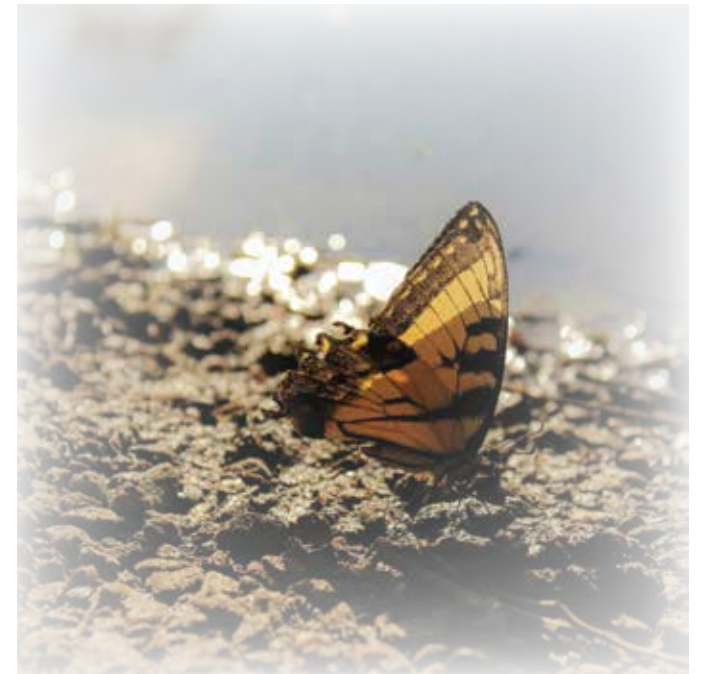
## Belonging

by Lauren Cannon

•

I am from blue ridges  
And the narrow, winding mountain pass  
I am from the honey suckle summer  
And hibernal winter

I am from great heights and craggy cliffs  
I am from trickling auburn creeks  
And plunging white waterfalls  
I am from Sunday bells ringing  
And the whippoorwill calling



I am from dense green  
From the hardwood and the hemlock  
I am from where the black bear roams  
I am from the train whistle blowing around the bend

I am from the fiddle and the banjo playing  
From voices of the hills hanging on the wind  
I am from the land of my heart  
I am from smoky mountains

I am from the departure  
From a fading view  
I am from beholding an evanescent presence  
To an enduring memory

I am from the flight crossing the miles  
I am from below the equator  
I am from a land, a people, a foreign tongue  
unknown to me  
I am from abroad

I am from red clay  
And unpaved roads  
I am from mosquito nets  
From slate tiles at a jungle’s border



I am from the pilgrim mission  
From the wayfaring journey  
I am from long roads  
From glorious sights  
And places new to me

I am from a drive stretching hours  
I am from a window view  
Of a passing night  
Of black silhouettes against black sky  
And a chasing moon

I am from the arrival  
From there and back again  
I am from a new zip code  
I am from luggage, scotch tape, and cardboard boxes

I am from persons and places for a season  
I am from heretodayandgonetomorrow  
I am from good byes

I am from finding fidelity in God  
Constancy in family  
And belonging beyond physical presence  
I am from a body wandering  
But a heart tethered and strung to roots buried deep beneath  
I am from where I started

**Blue**  
**by Danielle Schroeder**

•

My mother once told me that some people  
are naturally sad. She explained that some  
people’s  
insides are painted more shades of navy than  
crimson.

Water flows from the moon and her tears are the  
ichorous liquid that oils the automaton.

The cries of thunder are melancholic wails of  
unrequited love, and bursts hit with every  
crack of  
water on the tin roof.

My heart...my inkspot creates pictures amidst  
hydrangeas and baby’s breath, and scripted  
letters that smear lines like water over pen. I no  
longer wish to color within lines when all my  
paintings are archaic endeavors or underwater  
expanses.

I’m dripping down, and golden hands that reach  
to pick me up don’t hold on to anything solid.  
Their fingers come back empty and wet and  
tasting of moonlight.

I don’t evaporate.

My expanse reabsorbs into the damp earth and I  
hear those crise and odes from voices not  
unlike my own. The sky scoops me up, and with  
each passing minute the sounds of distress  
rising with the sky must cover her ears, allowing  
us to fall back down, creating bursts on tin  
roofs.

Listen when the raindrops sing.  
Only the blue can.

**Conversing the Path**  
**by Amy Flagler**

•

The path before us is muddled,  
Puddles fill, reflecting what I miss when my eyes  
are only looking down.

Look up at Me, not at your feet!  
Is hope before you in the dirt?  
Does faith grow when shoes hit soil, plodding  
forward, end unknown?

Let Me choose your next step, look at all I have  
made for you today.

Enjoy My creation.  
Take steps along the path I have set before you.  
Trust My ways over your own.

Hope grows as I glimpse new growth.  
Tiny leaves beginning to unfurl like a hand  
beckoning, come see!

Faith flourishes in my change of attention,  
loosening straps around myself, arms  
swinging as my pace settles in.

Love’s tendrils escape my tight grip, extending  
beyond where I see, setting root amongst  
brambles deep.

Yes, this is what I mean when I call you to walk  
with Me!

**Delightful is the Death of an Enemy**  
**by Walker Liles**

•

Watch as his grip fails!  
With the fall of his sword,  
His life leaving at my accord,  
Gratifying is the sound of my enemy’s wail.  
Oh the sight of his wretched corpse impaled.  
Within the battle-stricken gorge,  
Along the crimson-colored fjord,  
And my enemy- broken, bloody, and pale.

Oh to see him in his pride,  
Only for it to fall from his face  
Just before he drew his last breath.  
Death he could not abide,  
For death was his only place.  
Oh how delightful is my enemy’s death.

**Dominion**  
**by Jeremiah Bryan**

•

Your own people. Nothing more  
Precious than a family of three  
To input your knowledge, watch them  
Play Chess, while enjoying honey and tea.

Your own blood advancing,  
Demonized by the satanic  
Vocal minority, financing  
Themselves with legal thievery.

Wholesome tradition has become  
Something to fear.  
What ever happened to the radioactive  
elements that made a family nuclear?

Go to Church, Praise the Lord.  
Go on, find out what it’s worth.  
Raise a Christian family,  
And have Dominion over the Earth.

**Hit the Streets**  
**by Joshua Holbrook**

•

Let the streets overflow with singing,  
because mighty Jah has conquered  
Babylon is burning, Babylon has fallen  
War is over, freedom’s calling  
For many years has the serpent kept us down  
Deceiving our youngns’, running them outta town  
But now the powers that be, are buried in the  
Earth  
Her who sits on many waters lies dead in the surf

**Chorus**

People hit the streets with dancing, come down  
here and dance with me!  
(x4)

The woman is gone, no more any tears,  
The tree of life and healing dispatches all our  
fears  
And we dance for joy with Mighty Jah,  
We sing for joy with the Almighty God  
My enemies have all perished,  
Those that remain, are those who cherish  
The God of Holy Zion, God of our Fathers,  
And we, Jah people, we’re more than conquerors

**Chorus**

People hit the streets with dancing, come down  
here and dance with me!  
(x4)

**Bridge**

One day when we’re healed by the leaves of the  
tree  
One day when the nations, once blind, can see  
One day when the devil bows down on one knee



When the King reigns in Jerusalem,  
...then we'll be free...  
The moon comes out, ready to get the party  
begun  
And the stars peak down, to see what's going on  
Get on your dancin' shoes, and don't you show  
no shame  
Loosen up, party up, life is no more mundane

Chorus

People hit the streets with dancing, come down  
here and dance with me!  
(x4)

Human Connections

Anonymous

•

Seeking

For the lost sense of connection.  
A Place that lies in the hands of others.

Uncertain

I pour my soul to dust.  
Entertaining the idea of loving and being loved.  
Somehow, I find myself detached of meaningful  
moments.  
All lost by the current of time.

Searching

Creating, adding to the facts of the world.  
Answers that I hope will appear in my craft.

I hear a voice

That Enlightens me with a single truth.  
The only resource we have is each other.

The Land

by Ian Galey

•

My father, dear and gracious to a fault,  
Ere I was a walking child would take me  
On his lap and rumble softly from his heart,  
“My child, if only England you could see  
The way the birds and bees and trees shift fairly

In the morning breeze of spring's first golden  
days,  
Then you would know, the love I bear  
For this green country fair  
Then you would glimpse the love and care  
That extends from it to thee: the fruit of peace,  
The offspring of a generous land.”

When I could walk and run and sing  
And see the dances of the spring in living bloom,  
My father with the oddest smile would kneel  
In front of me, and shouldering me with his hand  
Would say quite raspily, “My son, for you—  
Tis for you, that war calls me from home;  
I'm fighting for the silver mists that roll  
About the rounded hills of newly wedded green,  
To see you running with a stick across the dewy  
morn;

I will strive to see thee live and well  
And with every beat in me, shall come to see  
A land, a home, where happy you could be.”

I saw him not until one day, I laid him in the  
ground;  
Returned he was to this sweet plot, to rest in holy  
peace,  
But ne'er again to see the spot where earth and  
wood and tree  
Marked the boundaries of a thought, a thought  
both fair and free.

Some winters passed with bittering cold,  
Alas the days grow thin.  
No mind, no fault, no seeping grin  
Could turn me from my thoughts within  
Of vengeance hot, without success and far be it  
from nobleness.  
But vengeance dies like fire, with little fuel to  
feed;  
The land, the plot, where ere I thought  
Would I and my father be  
Was overgrown but no forlorn,  
And so to work I set, to shape the ground  
And soon I found, how generous land could be.

A call again from England, to pull me from my  
land,  
But now I answered without thought,  
How could I allow this plot, to be the spot where  
I do rot  
As mounters o'er the mounts ascend and trample  
father dear.  
I laid me down on this sweet ground and prayed  
for every tree,  
The plot of plenty, the silent home, the land laid  
down for me.  
Sometime had passed and return I did to father's  
hallowed hearse;  
They lay me down, as I laid down my life from  
birth to earth.

Ode to Love

by Emily Williams

•

I

Oh wildfire of love, thou fuel of life and lands  
From whose unseen presence tears are driven  
Like a raindrop that dries in the desert sands

You alight in hues of sunburst orange and red  
Warming those you bless within your blaze  
In velvet heat and romance's golden thread

Your sacred light you scatter all abroad  
Asking no questions, you give yourself away  
Unrestrained, you walk where hatred trods

When light does fade and sun is cast by gloom  
And frost has bitten the soft and kind away  
Your eternal lantern's glow sets all abloom

In the passion of your never-ending flame  
What you embrace will never be the same

II

Oh blistering rain of love, on thou whose cloud  
The airy bliss of romance's kiss  
Does reside and with softness enshroud

The drying flora of the quiet heart  
Whispering for you doth take a breath  
And to its sands your life you do impart

When drought and desert dry do overtake  
And struggle the heart in unforgiving hate  
Down falls the rain and doth a tempest make

Thy waters collide upon earth's grassy floor  
Setting forth an ocean's swell of grace  
To never cease and only swell the more

You cool the night, the day, the brightest morn  
Oh, why can it not rain forevermore

III

In fields of poesies on a green, spring day  
Thou art the light which warms my skin  
Sending honey drenched kisses in your rays

The light which seeps through silk and glass  
Awakening my slumber in the morn  
With scents of milk and honey as clouds pass

A moonbeam shining ray by ray through drapes  
Illuminates my mind with constellations  
Reaching sleep to the patterns that love makes

A chasm of dark needs but a single torch  
To turn the air to golden beams of light  
A flicker though but little be so much

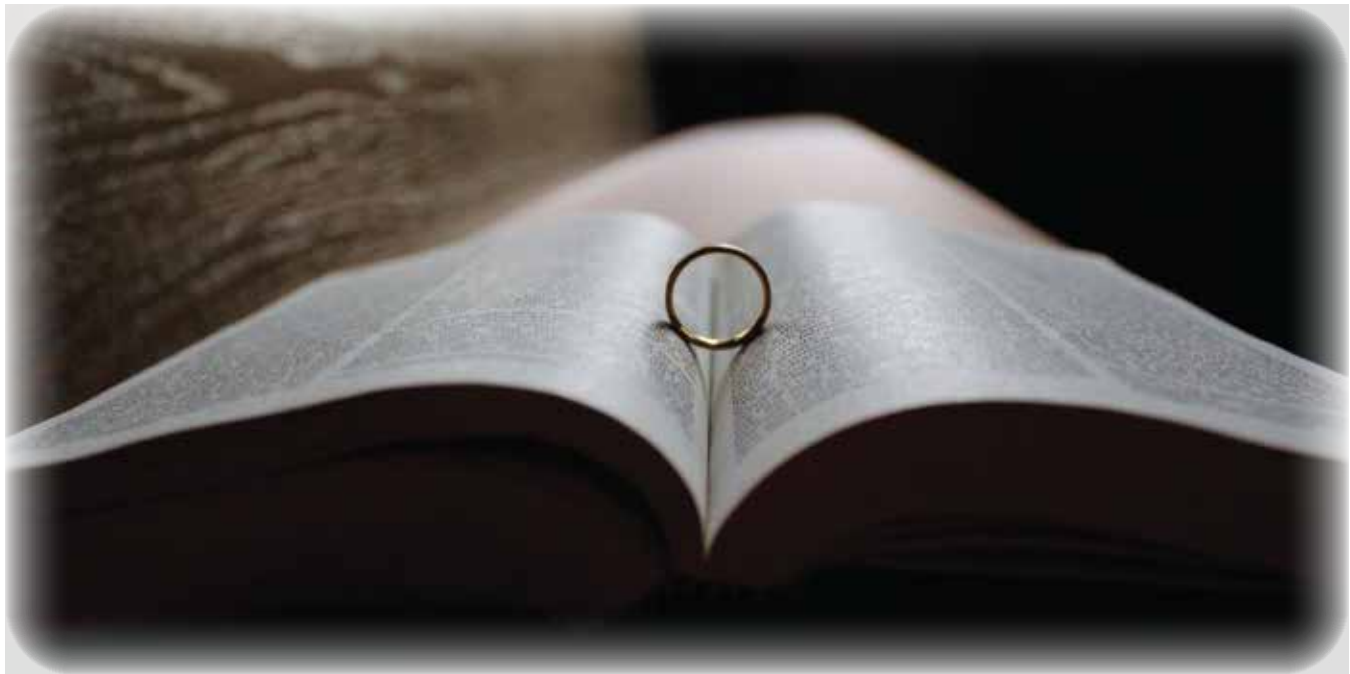
Though the dark is great oh love is more  
The savior of the world has proved this sure

IV

Oh, love is like the earth beneath my feet  
Alwas with me, never can I hide  
For wherever I touch the ground love and I meet

Make me a tree that I may root  
Within you and grow from your core  
That I may stretch and for all bare love's fruit





Love, your ground is patient, kind, and sure  
Oh how I want to never wrath or boast  
Planted firmly in you I'll endure

My hope is bound in you to never falter  
A solid ground in which I rest my feet  
And lay my troubles at His loving altar

Prophecies may fail and tongues may cease  
So love remains the greatest of all things

at the sky  
it is dark now, much sooner than it was before  
and Jupiter is growing nigh  
the mind is weary and yet the heart longs for the shore

to return to the summer and sound of the sea breeze  
to run and not be trapped, as you are now, by the hands on the clocks  
to smell the hyacinth, the crocuses, and the daisies  
but you must ignore the incessant gladiolus's mocks

**Ode to winter**  
by Lillian Queen

•

from the winds which howl and bluster  
ever of their own discontented run  
to the creeks which let out a shivering mutter  
and shine like gold and silver filigree in the early sun

there is a drowsiness in the still air  
the daisies, bees, and other flying things unknown  
have been replaced with a feathery snowy fare  
which floats down from old Solomon's whetstone

and while you sit in your windowsills and gaze up

winter only seems as if it came prematurely  
when you are halfway through it and the end is still so far away  
you took for granted the fiery nature of the fall  
until the sun behaved demurely  
now Minerva has crept into your song and kept foolishness at bay

but she has made a trade with this song  
she's brittled your bones and broken your teeth  
and stolen the hair which used to grow so long  
and that is that, but what lies beneath?

things to remember as you wait alone in your house  
of all the jolly springs and mischievous things  
ideas of music and love, once enjoyed, run around like a mouse  
and as the sky reaches its darkest, they paint a hymn on these new wings

**Overlooked**  
by Amy Flagler

•

Brilliant  
Beaming  
Tiny sun.  
Stepped on  
Crushed  
Disregarded by most.  
Tethered deep,  
Risking all to be known.  
Who else holds the worth of the picked over, the left behind.  
Betrayed by beauty unappreciated,  
Hated for merit untold,  
Singing out a gentle song to Heaven's ear.  
Available to the willing,  
The ones leaning in, waiting  
On your sweet call.

**My Pal**  
by Jeremiah Bryan

•

Would you believe me  
If I told you that you  
Make my day?  
I wish to ration compassion so that I may say:

My friend, my pal,  
Thank you for being there.  
You are more courageous than I.  
The thought of losing you beckons me to cry.

Your friendship makes me long to  
Be a friend to others,

To do my deeds without a price, to those  
I don't know, and to all my sisters and brothers.

Before I go away  
And disappear into the night,  
I beg you to hear these words,  
So I may be rid of my plight:

My friend, my pal,  
Thank you for being there.  
You are more courageous than I.  
The thought of losing you beckons me to cry.

But somewhere in the night,  
You came to me with love in your eyes.  
Your response to me flared bright red,  
As you fashioned compassion and said,

My friend, yes, my pal,  
You're welcome a thousand times over.  
You say that I have courage? Then yours is times two,  
But mine grows exponentially by my love for you.

That night, I slept most peacefully.  
Your're comforting and you're wonderful to see.  
Thank you for mending these broken shards.  
I wish you grace, and sincerely, warm regards.

**Untitled Poem**  
by Carson Yates

•

Equilibrium,  
Like the slow dance of Sun and Moon, a rise and fall with each passing  
The momentum of catastrophe seems far too great, too grand to ever find reversal  
Just as the dark Moon falls again, her quiet reign is lapsing.  
Just as heartache has played with you in full, its strike yields diminishing returns.  
Like death summons life, Moon succumbs to the gracious warmth of Sun.  
As the debts become paid,



As tears become dry,  
As the tired mind awakens,  
So Springs forward Joy, to ravish you in light  
Devastation has met its match and momentarily,  
freedom seems known  
The game of exchange will play on, leaving  
you living on a coin flip, always held up in  
outcomes  
However, the true transcendence of this war is  
found in the balance.  
As dark acquaints light, as Love battles Hate,  
as death creates life, the freedom of the  
soul rests in embracing the story of an  
effervescent equilibrium.

**Untitled Poem**  
by Lexi Hudson

*Garden*  
The earth and seas and stars did not need me  
Neither did He, yet here I stand freely.  
Crafted out of a love scandal none did foresee.  
His love flowed freely as He once bid me  
To tend the soil from whence I came.  
Yet lonely was I, no one to call my name.

I can say that He was all I needed,  
And all of my needs were headed.  
But there was one piece of me  
I felt I had yet to see.  
Perhaps a helper much greater than I  
Through which His love would magnify.

I fell into a deep sleep and in my dream I saw  
Only adoration, bliss, sacrifice and awe.  
When I awoke, the lengths of the universe shook  
As I saw her standing near an opulent brook.  
Formed from my flesh and built by my bones,  
Her alto voice was singing in honey dripped  
tones.

She was the most beautiful creature I ever had  
seen.  
My breath had halted as she glided towards me.

The pinnacle of creation stood right by my  
side—  
Where my rib was taken for my heavenly bride.  
Then sings my soul my Savior God to Thee  
Oh how I had wished for every day like this to  
be.

Not knowing that she would lead to my demise,  
I adorned her with praises that reached to the  
skies.  
We did walk hand in hand without any shame  
Until we rejected our Holy Father's name.  
This pinnacle that I once loved had killed me  
inside  
Now from Him and her I must run and hide.

That fruit she offered me was sweet for a  
moment  
But now I must ask for a forever forgiving  
atonement.  
My hands are now filthy, dirty and stained  
For which I sorrowfully hang my head in eternal  
pain.  
Now such guilt and regret can be plainly seen  
Which can only be absolved by a humble  
Nazarene.

*Thanks*  
Thank you for the sweet warmth you've brought  
to me others,  
bringing those of different backgrounds to the  
closest of brothers.  
You resound beyond every circumstance and  
dialect,  
absolutely nothing compares to your effect.  
Your speciality is keeping impartialities vast  
distances apart;  
the perfect remedy for the faint of heart.  
Walking into lives at opportune moments never  
undesired,  
you are the cure-all, end-all, the perfect ceasefire.  
You are often associated with joyous occasions,  
life's highest peaks,  
painting cascading beams of sunlight across rosy

cheeks.  
Thank you for filling voided night skies with  
opulent constellations,  
for being a force stronger than gravity, without  
preservation.

*David*  
He was highly favored and deeply loved.  
A mighty warrior was he, his leadership  
significantly above.  
Son of Jesse, raised to be a Shepard and nothing  
more.  
He had slain the giant as a boy, something never  
seen before.  
He went to the front lines, out of the fields he  
was from,  
To later bring honor to the Almighty Kingdom.  
As a man his fleshly desires were strong, having  
many faults.  
Seeing her bathing on the roof, sin was  
committed by default.  
He was redeemed by grace, undeserved was he.  
David was loved and cherished, and in ways  
David is like me.

*Ouch*  
The sun went down last night,  
And your memories are set alight.  
Of all that could have been,  
Because they found that to pretend  
Is much easier than investing the feelings  
And sharing oneself— it is difficult to be  
revealing.

It takes two to be strangers,  
And no one can fully warn you of the dangers  
Of wearing your heart of your sleeve.  
Not that you would believe,  
It's something you need to learn on your own—  
Please stop checking your phone.

Being told no  
Is much like finding a foe,  
An arranged yet unwanted opposition,

A simple and one-sided decision.  
Being rejected will hurt if you don't see it coming  
A sorrowful look is one that's not so becoming.

The sun came up today.  
And tomorrow it will relay  
The message that you will be alright  
This predicament will not always remain a plight.  
How tragic it is to want a counter part  
And before you even fall you must depart.

*fin.*



## To the Readers of the Lamp Post:

This edition of Montreat College's literary magazine cannot create a satisfying conclusion without taking a minute to recognize the current international pandemic, how it has affected production of *The Lamp Post*, and how people have stepped up to give their all during this time of crisis.

Because of Buncombe County's "Stay Home - Stay Safe" declaration, the editorial staff for this release have been split up for a significant portion of the submission and editing process, which of course made it more difficult to collaborate as a team while still making our pre-pandemic deadlines. More importantly, however, the practice of self-isolation and its effects also severed the lines of communication between editors and creators: the wonderful God-given people whose handiwork you just experienced. With this in mind, the editors of *The Lamp Post* would like to extend their gratitude and appreciation towards the writers, photographers, painters, and poets who helped us navigate the highly adapted editorial system in order to be able to release on time. This edition would not be possible without their flexibility, and we have been blessed to be able to work with them.

Even in these difficult times, *The Lamp Post* has striven to achieve its goal of providing a showcase for the creative abilities of Montreat College students, faculty, and alumni, and only after receiving as wide a range of submissions as we did can we say for certain that this goal was met. Unfortunately, we couldn't accept every work of art which we received, but the fact that we received so many is a testament to the creativity of the Montreat community.

Many thanks must be given to our faculty advisor, Dr. Elizabeth Juckett, who took on the difficult task of overseeing the development of *The Lamp Post*, and who also guided the editorial staff as we adjusted to the new normal in order to produce an excellent product in which we can all take pride.

It's been a hard time for all of us, but we hope that we were able to provide some small method of relaxation through this edition of *The Lamp Post*. It was truly an honor and a blessing to see the Montreat community **unmasked** in their artistic abilities, but now we must sadly request that the masks go back on for your own safety: there's a deadly virus on the loose, after all.

With prayers for a future of hope and healing,

*The Lamp Post Editorial Staff*



### Statement of Purpose

The Lamp Post is an interdisciplinary undergraduate arts journal—created, designed, and published by and for Montreat students, alumni, staff, faculty, and supporters. At The Lamp Post, we believe that art comes from within and potentially creates response, reaction, inquiry, and discourse. We do not limit the definition of art; instead, we believe “we are the clay, and You our potter; all of us are the work of Your hand” (Is. 64:8).

The Lamp Post is published annually in hardcopy and/or electronically, with special issues appearing selectively.

### Editorial Policies

The Lamp Post accepts submissions via email at [thelamppost@montreat.edu](mailto:thelamppost@montreat.edu). Upon receipt of submission, the submission will be reviewed by members of the editorial staff and faculty advisors. The Lamp Post reserves the right to edit texts received; however, substantial changes are made in consultation with the original creator. Montreat College administration gives final approval before publication.

Creators retain copyright and publishing rights to all submissions without restrictions.

There is no limit to the length of submissions, but shorter (two pages or less) textual submissions are preferred. Visual art submissions should be sent as attachments to an email with the artist's contact information present.

### Selection Criteria

The Lamp Post considers submissions of artistic merit in any publishable form. After review, submissions will fall into one of three categories: Acception Without Revision, Acception Pending Revision, or Decline to Accept. The Editorial Board of The Lamp Post reserves the right to summarily decline works that unnecessarily glorify violence, promote any variant of prejudice, contain illicit content, or do not represent the academic standards of Montreat College.

*Opinions presented herein are those of the student authors and editors, and do not necessarily represent or reflect the views of the Montreat College administration, faculty, or staff.*



