Rifling About

The night never ends

For children of the

Cumberland Valley,

Whose souls, wrapped

in the Holy Ghost,

Forever rifle about within

For blame: once saved

always saved, unless—

The paradox begins again.

What happens when

The blue morning dew

Evaporates

Like crabgrass raptured

By a sweet grandmother

Planting spring tomatoes,

Revealing the disgusting earth

And the dark limestone caverns

Underneath?

What happens when

Blessed assurance

In the soulless gaze

Of the Black Angus

Is held accountable,

Locking eyes

With a broken old farmer,

Begging forgiveness

At the stockyard.

What happens when

The water moccasin’s

Warning—

That sickly-sweet watermelon scent—

Oozes from your pores

Like the sweat of ecstasy

Or eternal damnation?

The sun rises,

As it always does,

And the valley

Forgets the night,

Cleansing the souls

Of those left behind

In murky-green waters,

Calling its children

Back to the altar

To hear a sermon

About the night

Steadily approaching.