

CHAD ABUSHANAB

*Girl Found Dead  
in the Sequatchie Valley*

*"The victim's parents declined to comment."*

— The Middle Tennessee Courier

They found her body lying here  
between the skeletons of pine.  
As though by some design  
she died in Fall, the time of year

when shadows kissed her thin, pale wrists,  
and the sun, at last, turned cold and white  
like filled with frozen light.  
The talk is vague, but most insist

her boyfriend led her to the hollow  
at night, they had a fight, that she  
was newly pregnant, and he  
was mad, and madness is what followed.

But the stories only flirt with reason,  
and the local papers let it go,  
leaving these woods to know  
and to forget. Now's the season

when the dead wind shakes the leafless trees,  
the purple clover turns to brown,  
and all the lights in town  
look far away, like listless eyes.

And I wonder what's out here to learn  
besides the silence of these hills  
once final sunlight fills  
the valley like a broken urn?

It cannot hold. The light escapes  
as though it's liquid through a sieve,  
and I want to believe —  
as all gets tangled in the drapes

of night — in wholeness, if not peace.  
The girl is dead. Her voice is lost  
in all the stories tossed  
like leaves when autumn strips the trees.

What happened here, I'll never know.  
The valley holds such secrets dear.  
Her love, her screams, her fear  
and blood all make the kudzu grow.