

New River Anthology



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2024 New River Anthology

A Collection of Student Art & Writing

Volume 28

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The New River Anthology Distinguished Author Award
is funded by *The New River Anthology* Scholarship. The
award is given each year to three writers whose work
best represents their genre. The committee is pleased to
present this award to the following students:

"our riptide" by Jada Richardson (Poetry)

**"The Autistic Experience" by Ariel Swinson
(Nonfiction)**

**"Where Things Go to Die" by Elizabeth Humphrey
(Fiction)**

Publication Note

The New River Anthology is comprised of writing and artwork created by Coastal Carolina Community College students during the 2023-2024 Academic Year. The various works within this publication represent ideas expressed or artwork designed by students; in addition, the works may incorporate words or phrases, as well as explore themes, that some may find potentially disturbing or distressing. Therefore, any ideas expressed or artwork designed by students within this publication are not purported to be reflective of any views or positions of Coastal Carolina Community College.

Coastal Carolina Community College is committed to not only educational excellence — by fostering an engaging teaching and learning environment that embraces inclusivity as well as promotes personal and cultural enrichments in order to enhance the student experience — but also student success.

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**Artwork pieces are bolded.*

***Content warnings are in place at the very top of these pieces. Please read carefully and proceed with caution.*

our riptide

By Jada Richardson

we were unplanned
and unexpected
two souls in a world
surrounded by rejection
when we collided
every star seemed to light up the sky
we had a connection that couldn't be neglected
i was looking for peace and you were looking for space
two tracks merged on the interstate
now we're together trying to find our pace
we're healing hearts that we didn't break
and trying really hard not to make a mistake
we're trying not to step on eggshells
of eggs that neither of us broke
and trying to push toward goals
and not get in each other's way
but the beauty of our riptide
is not the initial jerk that pulled us in
but pushing each other toward the surface
so we don't begin to drown within
and with time we'll teach each other how to swim
and to the shore, we'll reach
for our happy end

*"we're healing hearts that we didn't break
and trying really hard not to make a mistake"*

The Autistic Experience

By Ariel Swinson

THUMP, THUMP, THUMP, THUMP, THUMP! My heart raced as if it was going a million miles per hour. Each beat lured me farther into the hazy void of my mind. The real world was nothing but a daze now. Too much for me to even contemplate. Instinct took over. Back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, I paced. A walking corpse, too weak to even lift my arms. No control over my own body. Mind too hazy to think. The world much too loud and much too bright. Back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. It was all I had.

I always knew I was different in one way or another: never understanding what everyone else seemingly understood, always misunderstanding, always odd, but never truly knowing why. Throughout the whole of my life, I was never allowed to forget that public distinction because many of my peers never allowed me an ounce of mercy, never let me forget just how much of an outsider I truly was. They always said such horrible things, always “joked” in such demeaning ways, and always playing such dreadful “games.” All at my personal, physical, and mental expense, I might add. I will never forget one horrendous “game” they played that was called the “Ariel Touch.” My peers acted as if everything I touched turned into a puddle of green, cartoonish, molten acid that would dissolve their very bones if they even thought of going anywhere close to it. I was only nine years old.

TOO BRIGHT! Was all I could think as the blinding gleam of the florescent classroom lights from up ahead suddenly and painfully pierced my eyes. As if it was the sword of a valiant knight stabbing through the body of an enemy of the realm. The world was nothing but a bright white haze. Blinding me further with each passing second. I couldn't even recognize my own hands in front of me. My mind pounded from a migraine. I tightly closed my eyes, laying my head on my desk. My arms wrapped around me to create a safe, dark void. Blocking out any light.

You can imagine what impact this mercilessness from my peers had on my mental health. Nothing good, I can tell you that. I quickly and deeply sunk into a severe, dark depression: feeling nothing but worthless and guilty, losing joy from the things I loved, barely sleeping, and if I did, every dream I had was a horrific night-terror. Not only this, but I was suffering from horrible depressive psychosis. I was having horrific delusions and even a few hallucinations. Everyone brushed me off when I tried to talk to them about it, telling me it was just normal “female things.”

In nothing but a sudden flash, my clothing felt like coarse and gritty sandpaper. As if the fibers of my clothing were gnawing at my very being and soul. I could feel the individual strands of thread rub against my skin. Everything so rough it almost hurt. With each motion, the gnawing got worse and worse. 'Til it felt like nothing of my being was left but bones. My flesh rubbed away long ago.

My quest to get help was a challenging one. It was as if I was climbing a steep, snowy mountain with no mountaineering gear. Just my bare hands. All by myself. Even my mother tried to stop me. (She blamed herself for my issues.) I knew I was autistic, and I knew I was depressed. So, I had to keep trekking to reach my goal of reaching help. I would no longer suffer alone. I couldn't fight this failing battle alone anymore.

My ears rang from the loudness. The world screeching straight into my ear. Every rustle of paper sounded to me as if it was a blaring emergency siren. TOO LOUD! Each mere tap of a foot was a roaring echo of an elephant stomp to my ears. The ringing and pain were too much for me to bear. So, I stuffed paper towels into my ears to dull the noise. At least a little. I later realized everyone around me carried on as usual. Nothing was wrong for them. It was all just me. All of these things, the pacing, brightness, sensitivity, and noise, were all just me. The source of my suffering...was me.

*"So, I had to keep trekking to reach my goal of reaching help.
I would no longer suffer alone. I couldn't fight this failing battle
alone anymore."*

Where Things Go to Die

By Elizabeth Humphrey

There is a place under my bed where things go to die.

It's where I hid all my dolls when I finally deemed myself "grown up," so I didn't have to face giving them away. It's where I placed all my old threaded friendship bracelets into a clear box because I was too sentimental to throw them away when the friendship went south or died out. After high school, I stuffed all my unsigned yearbooks and filled-up sketchbooks in the corner.

The rest of my room was clean and tidy; I can't stand clutter. That disdain didn't translate to the space under my bed though.

Once the items were packed away and consolidated, I never thought about them again. I never wondered who got the "Best Dressed!" or the "Longest Lasting Couple!" superlative in my senior year of high school or what colors my old best friend, Nina, had braided for our friendship bracelet. Of course, most of these things I remembered. Best Dressed: Samantha and Neil. Longest Lasting Couple: Tyler and Kelsey. The friendship bracelet: light pink and red.

The things under my bed didn't really die. I just didn't care to think about them anymore.

I was sitting on my bedroom floor. The cold of the hardwood seeped through the denim of my overalls and sent goosebumps down my legs, even in the heat of July. I was crafting, using puffy stickers and photos I had taken at the fair with my family, when I saw the edge of the light blue envelope. I turned my head away and tried to focus on the project at hand, but the envelope invaded my thoughts.

It had been two years since the envelope first made its way into my hands.

I got home late from my shift at the local diner. I used to pick up hours as a waitress during school for extra money to pay for gas or art supplies from our local craft store. I walked up the steps and saw a peek of blue sticking out from under our brown doormat. It was one of those decorative floor mats that said, "Hello Easter!" or "Welcome Friend!" My mom was so excited when she bought it. I reached down and picked up the mat, grabbing the blue envelope.

I stared down at the blocky, uneven handwriting and knew.

After firmly locking the door behind me, I ran up the stairs two at a time. I paced the length of my room, clutching the envelope with a white-knuckled grip. I stayed that way for half an hour before I slid the envelope under my wire bed frame.

And that is where it had lived ever since. Except, unlike the other things under my bed, the letter haunted me. Every time I passed, I checked for the swath of blue. It was a ghost whose presence I needed to acknowledge. After two years I'd hoped that the nagging of the blue envelope would fade, but it was even more constant. On the floor of my room that July, I couldn't stop thinking about it.

I turned my head back towards my bed graveyard and crawled slowly towards the edge. I reached my hand underneath, feeling the dust cling to my fingertips, until I reached the envelope. Slowly, I brought it out from under the bed.

Jesse's handwriting filled the front of the envelope. He had written my name in uneven letters that stood tall on all ends. I flipped it over and carefully ripped the tape off of the seal. Gently, I pulled out the folded piece of composition paper that he had stuffed inside.

Adalynn,

I know you disagree with what I'm doing, but it's something that I have to do.

We were always top of our class. I am glad that we competed all of these years to be the best. Now, I understand that it's all overrated. Who really cares about the grades you got in high school geometry (one point less than me) or your over-involved club activities? No one. What matters is that you're doing what you think is right.

And this is right.

*I want to be an actor. I want to chase my dreams. I want to learn how to tell stories. I want to tell **my** story. I want to move to California. I want to struggle. I want to learn. I want to **live**.*

You know how in school we learned about the Gold Rush? Well, this is my Gold Rush. I'm chasing gold, and I want to find it. My biggest hope is that you find something that you want to chase. Not good grades or perfection, but something that is really you.

In my mind, I always imagined us doing this together. Growing up, moving on, and dreaming. I know now that you never wanted that. I should have told you everything sooner. I should have told you that I've loved you since you tripped and fell on the first day of gym class or made that weird PowerPoint presentation about Beatles Conspiracy theories. For me, it's been us against the world since we talked 'til midnight over text about color theory in movies, since we argued about Oscar nominations, since you came over and helped with my Yale application and re-wrote my entire essay.

I should have never sprung this all on you like I did. I should have never confessed my feelings to you at the graduation rehearsal. I should have never told you, at the same time, that I was turning down Yale. I know we were supposed to go together and as friends. I know you don't like change.

The truth is, I can't be friends with you. If you said the word, I would stay. I would drop my plans and stay. Even if it meant abandoning my Gold Rush because you are more important than all of that. But I can't stay here as your friend.

I can't do it.

This letter is stupid. I know it. You probably won't even read it.

I wanted to tell you that I know that you'll be the best student Yale has ever seen, even better than Meryl Streep or Taft.

If you need anything, please tell me. Please don't ignore me forever after this. Please message me every year when the Oscar nominations are announced or if your essay is about a stupid topic and you want to rant. Because even though I can't stay here and be your friend, I can't imagine a life without you in it.

Yours,

Jesse

I stared at the words in front of me. He was right though. I didn't read his letter. Instead, I had watched his *Instagram* for photos and stalked the tagged accounts. I had gone to Yale and been lonely, without a person to talk to who I actually knew. I never had to search for friends. The loneliness faded after a semester or two. Sometimes, I would draft a text out to Jesse and then delete it. I would repeat the process day by day. It's hard to stop doing something that used to be commonplace.

Once you leave a letter unread for so long, it loses its actual meaning. Things get lost in time and distance. It was for this reason that I had left the blue envelope under my bed. I wanted my problems with Jesse to be lost in time and distance. I wanted to be able to go back to when we were friends who could be silly and fun and awkward. I wanted to go back to when things weren't so tense, before I had to tip-toe around every conversation.

I wanted to go back to before that graduation rehearsal where he poured his heart out, and I sat silent. How do you tell someone that you don't love them like they care about you, but you still love them as a friend? That you can't imagine a day without talking to them or meeting with them to study? How can you tell someone that?

I laid my head against the wood and picked up my phone. I scrolled through his *Instagram* and checked his latest post. It was a picture of the Oscar nominees. He was congratulating a friend whose movie I hadn't liked that much.

I guess I couldn't rant to him anymore. I picked up the envelope and put it into the small, plastic trash can beside my door.

That is a place where things go to be forgotten.

"The things under my bed didn't really die. I just didn't care to think about them anymore."

I'm The Song You Skipped

By Lakea "LoLo" Tucker

When everything in life makes you wait.

When everyone leaves their position and life yells checkmate.

When fate isn't smiling upon you, and you can't fill your family's plate.

When you keep looking around to find a remedy but it seems too late.

When it took one amazing morning for the sun to shine on a winter day...

The gate opens and you realize in life that you must make mistakes.

Tolerating doesn't necessarily mean you can put up with the trauma of feeling like you're a disgrace.

I'm in the shadows waiting to ascend and when my line gets straight everyone will love me and claim that they can relate.

But guess what, I'm that song you skipped and found out later that I was fire.

You couldn't grasp the flow of my beat, so you viewed my tempo as being diminished and under the wire.

I hope you don't mind; I kicked my fears and followed my desires.

And as you watch the smoke from my fire, the only way to go from here is higher and higher.

"You couldn't grasp the flow of my beat, so you viewed my tempo as being diminished and under the wire."

happy birthday

By Jada Richardson

happy birthday
to the boy who left my life
just as suddenly as he came into it
the one i spent nights thinking about
hoping i could be a small light
in the deep hole he had himself in

to the boy i saw as scared and hurt
who i felt needed me more than he wanted to
maybe that's why he decided to disappear
to erase me from photos
to pluck me from memories
to push away every possible feeling
that he just might need someone to lean on
because the structure he handcrafted himself
was beginning to cave
he let one too many tears slip away
into the water that's now under our bridge

happy birthday
to the boy my mother called her son
the boy i used to laugh with every single day
and couldn't remember a time it wasn't that way
i've kept every photo from that time
i've thought about deleting them
but that wouldn't erase the thought from my mind
i wish i had more time

i didn't understand you but i felt i was starting to
until you pulled your own rug from beneath you

happy birthday
to the boy who self-destructs
who ruins everyone's trust
because he never seemed to have enough

*"the boy i used to laugh with every single day
and couldn't remember a time it wasn't that way"*



“Untitled 1”

By Curtis Lankford

Heracles in a Small Town

By Elizabeth Humphrey

I walked through the door with you, the air was cold, but something about it felt like home somehow.

My earbuds sang as I pushed open the soft pink doors to my small, white cottage carrying the brown cardboard box that had been lying on my steps. FOR ADA, was scrawled on the top in blocky handwriting, and the edges were coated in thick packing tape.

I set the box on the wooden coffee table and walked over to my worn, brown leather couch, sinking down into the cushion. I leaned towards the box and carefully ripped the tape from the edges. Inside, hundreds of photos lay on top of loaned books, burned CD mixtapes, home-made cards, and sheets of notebook paper covered in notes. It looked like artifacts from a past life or a museum exhibit of a relationship.

I grabbed the stacks of photos and laid them out across the table. A note, that was wedged in between two pictures, floated to the floor. The same blocky handwriting from outside the box covered the blue lines of the paper: FROM TURNER R.

I picked it up and ripped it in two.

Small towns are confining. They reduce your existence to the boy you dated in high school, the one bad decision you made when you were 19, or your greatest successes. I could never again be the girl I was before I met Turner Rush: the Ada who was a singer, a student, an academic.

After Turner left, I realized that I had reduced myself.

I was just Ada Losen who loved Turner Rush. The Ada Losen who hated Turner Rush. Ada Losen who dated Turner Rush. The girl who went to his games, brought his favorite candies, and rushed to his house when his oil tycoon dad was mean. Who said, "Don't worry! Oil will be a dead thing in a few years and your dad will go broke!" The girl who sewed matching Halloween costumes, who always wore green. The one who consoled him after he didn't score the winning point in the playoffs, even though she had just been rejected from her dream school.

Everything was about Turner, even me.

Turner was the hero in every version of the tale. The church women at tea agreed he was a “sweet boy.” Even after he failed all his classes during the first semester of college because he just didn’t try. Even after he wrecked his brand-new truck, speeding for the thrill of it. He could do no wrong in their eyes.

They sang his praises like a Greek hero. They spoke like Turner was Heracles and I was the family he killed. No one cares about the family; they only care about Heracles’s power and strength. Even after the family’s death, they will claim the swaying of his mind. They will say he didn’t mean to do it or that he was forced. The ladies at tea will call it a necessary evil.

They’ll say that Turner was better off for the loss of me.

I stared at the photos sitting on the coffee table. Me and Turner at graduation. I traced a finger over the shapes of our dark green gowns and blocky diploma covers. I looked radiant, with long hair to my elbows and a wide-eyed smile. Turner was looking at me with two fingers raised in a peace sign towards the camera lens.

Anger filled my mind. How many of the biggest moments of my life had he taken over? My high school graduation, my 18th birthday, my first day of college, my celebration of being published. I couldn’t remember what it felt like. Now, looking back, all I could feel was him, and I hated it. I wanted to go back and erase everything, start anew. I wanted to run to seventeen-year-old me in AP Literature and shake her shoulders. I wanted to wake her up. I wanted to run into my closet and tear out all the green clothes—his favorite color. I wanted to restart college somewhere new, where he hadn’t been around every corner.

I wanted to move somewhere different, where he wasn’t at the grocery store or at the mall. Where he wasn’t Heracles. Where he wasn’t a hero.

I wanted to be the hero. Hadn’t I already done the labors? Hadn’t I already suffered the trials?

I swept the photos off the table and listened as they scattered over the hardwood floor. I put my head down, touching the table with my forehead. I moved backward when my head hit paper, instead of wood. I looked down at a lone photo: me at my birthday party, sitting at the table in my parents' house. I brought the photo closer to my face, inspecting it. I looked at the pastel colors of the cake before me, the glow of the candles, the smiles of the people surrounding me. Then, I looked at myself: the empty smile, the chipped nails, and the fancy dress.

Notably absent from the photo, unlike the others in the box, was Turner.

The photo had only been taken a year before the box had shown up on my door. I had never looked at photos from that day. I had never seen myself or my cake through a lens. I tried not to remember the times Turner decided not to show up or the times that I had sat, waiting for him to come. I tried to block out the day when everyone, including my own parents, asked when he was going to show.

After I blew out my candles, I called Turner to ask him why he didn't come. He said he had outgrown birthday parties.

I don't know if he had outgrown birthday parties or if he had just outgrown me.

I was different from Ada at that birthday party. I had shorter hair. I graduated college. I didn't have to wait for Turner to show. In fact, I dreaded his appearance.

He had reduced himself to me.

He had reduced himself from the storybook hero everyone believed him to be, to a coward. A liar. If he was Heracles, I had exiled him to his island. He may have his immortality and his admiration, but he only had so far to go. He only had so much time free from reminders of what he had lost. Reminders of me.

It was time to capture my own hero's journey.

I reached over and started to gather the photos that I had pushed onto the floor. I plopped them down in uneven piles on the table, as I rushed to my bookshelf. On the very top, was a collection of unused scrapbooks. I grabbed the largest one and a glue stick.

I sat down on the floor, closer to the table, grabbed my pen, and wrote, "For Ada." I pasted the photo of me and Turner at high school graduation on the front page.

Underneath I penned, "It was rare, I was there. I remember it all too well..."

"Turner was the hero in every version of the tale. The church women at tea agreed he was a 'sweet boy'. Even after he failed all his classes during the first semester of college because he just didn't try. Even after he wrecked his brand-new truck, speeding for the thrill of it. He could do no wrong in their eyes."



“Color After the Rain”

By Rachel M. Cordero

****Content Warning:**

The following work explores the theme of violence, which some readers may find potentially disturbing or distressing.

Is Camden Dead

By Lakea "LoLo" Tucker

Is Camden Dead...

Staggering murder rate, Is it too late?

Dense criminals thinkin' they can get
away but the mind is too ludicrous, so they stay.

Is Camden Dead...

Come see how we live; you'll think you were in a dog pit surrounded by saliva and shit! The Mayor doesn't want to admit that her mind just can't commit!

Is Camden Dead...

A negative image of the display of crosses is what the bosses call it. The crosses are a call to action or maybe a little satisfaction!

Is Camden Dead...

We need some new tactics...

The city has no showmanship or dictatorship.

Silent Council Leadership got us fighting and killing like we're on a battleship with no companionship!

Protest at Noon...

Overseers consider us buffoons; our people are dying too soon!

How many do we have to lose; we need help to prove to the youth and the news that Camden is not screwed!

Post-Traumatic Stress...

We livin' in this lifetime trying to stay blessed through all this death...

Devastated from poverty the people turn to thuggery and muggery.

The Misery is not a Mystery!

*"Overseers consider us buffoons; our people are
dying too soon!"*

The Hunter Becomes the Hunted: Interlude I

By Noah Curran

Sarte Workshop, Winter 1806

Being a sponsor for the Rebellion proved beneficial, Gerard realized.

His business was performing better than he could've ever imagined. Since the Rebellion's beginnings, Gerard Sartre and his wife had been working nonstop, tailoring uniforms for the rebel soldiers. Excluding the civilian rebels (who outnumbered the soldiers significantly), the Rebellion consisted of roughly 40,000 soldiers, at least half of which Gerard and Colette Sartre made uniforms for. And of course, they were paid a fair amount for their services.

Both Gerard and Colette were in their 50s, just shy of 60. They both had wrinkling pearl-colored skin, thin graying hair, and a little bit of fat below each of their chins. Both of them wondered if they would be able to retire after the Rebellion.

It was a rather uneventful day. Colette had finished sewing a seam in a blouse she had been working on, specifically one with a pattern of a mockingbird on a branch. She took off her thimble and stood up.

Across from her, her husband sat in a wooden rocking chair by the fireplace, snoring lightly. She walked to her husband and tapped his shoulder with her delicate finger. She held up the finished blouse, wordlessly asking for his thoughts on it.

"Looks nice," Gerard commented after slowly lifting his eyes. "Is it for Fleur?"

Colette nodded.

About two weeks ago, Gerard had received a letter from a Rebellion messenger on horseback telling him that the Rebellion would arrive in Montgomery soon and that another messenger would visit them once they arrived. That messenger should be arriving today, Gerard reminded himself.

"Well then, go have her try it on and see how she likes it," Gerard finished, smiling.

Colette turned around, her back slightly hunched with age, and called out to her daughter. "Fleur! I have a blouse I want you to try on!"

"Coming!"

From another room came a young, cheerful figure. She was 21 years old and had footsteps like a young rabbit. Her hair was a long, flowing sunflower-blond and her eyes a honey-brown. She quickly accepted the blouse and held it up to her chest before hurrying to her room. Her mother followed suit.

Witnessing this exchange, Gerard smirked lightly. He leaned back in his chair, collecting his thoughts. It was short lived, though, as he heard a loud knocking at his door. He stood up and answered the door, feeling the chilly air brush against his face when the door swung open. At the door was a figure of medium height who was in his early 40s.

"Ah. Welcome, Lieutenant Walewski. I assume the Rebellion has arrived?"

"Greetings, Mr. Sartre. I'm here to tell you that they'll arrive by dusk at the latest."

Gerard nodded.

"There is one thing I have to ask, though," Lieutenant Walewski added.

"Feel free," Gerard replied. "Oh, and come in and have a seat."

Gerard held the door open as Lieutenant Walewski stepped inside. His uniform, one which Gerard made for him, had a few tears here and there, but nothing too damaged. Lieutenant Walewski sat down in a chair at the kitchen table.

"Liquor?" Gerard offered.

"Sure."

Grabbing a bottle from one cabinet and a small glass from another, Gerard walked over to Lieutenant Walewski and poured him his drink.

"Gerard! Where'd you put the pins? I need to make an adjustment on Fleur's..." Colette yelled into the entrance of the hallway before stopping mid-sentence. She noticed Lieutenant Walewski and her husband sitting at the kitchen table, both looking at her. "...blouse," she finished awkwardly. "Forgive me for my impoliteness."

"Don't worry about it," Gerard answered. "The pins are in the bottom right drawer."

Colette grabbed the pins from the drawer and quickly retreated to Fleur's room.

"So," Gerard continued. "What is it you wish to ask me?"

"It's regarding Fleur."

Gerard's face darkened at those words, and his brows furrowed. "You still hold a grudge over her and your brother even after six years? I know she left you heartbroken, but why won't you just let it go?"

"Do not call that man my brother. And besides, Fleur's nothing to me now anyways."

Gerard breathed in deeply, then exhaled. "Look. I'm going to have to politely ask you to leave at once, Lieutenant—"

"No, you are not," Lieutenant Walewski interjected, noticing Gerard's eyes intensify a little. "Relax, I'm not here to do anything malicious. I just want an answer. That's all."

"What do you mean 'answer'?"

Lieutenant Walewski grinned; his gold tooth glistened. "I'll get straight to the point. Five years ago, you and your wife visited Nicolas before his wedding to Fleur. The three of you all went into a room and discussed something in private. What was it?"

"And if I don't answer, or provide you with an answer you don't like?"

Lieutenant Walewski's grin widened as he sipped his liquor. "You and your wife will be labeled as traitors. Besides, I already pieced together what it is. I just want confirmation, so don't lie to me."

Gerard panicked. "You can't do that. We're—"

Lieutenant Walewski slammed his glass onto the table and stood up. "What? 'Precious assets'? That you're sponsors?" He scoffed, "Don't make me laugh! All it takes to get rid of you is a simple rumor like, 'Oh, Mr. and Mrs. Sartre are providing intel to the Tsar-Anglican government!' Or even better: 'Mr. and Mrs. Sartre are hiding an enemy of the Rebellion in their home!' And then it'll spread like wildfire!" Lieutenant Walewski spoke maniacally, noticing Gerard's pale face getting even paler. "Then you, your business, your family—all will be gone in an instant!"

"Silence!" Gerard quavered.

Lieutenant Walewski chuckled. "You and your business mean nothing to us. With the amount of suffering the Gaulan people have gone through, the Rebels could fight naked if they had to. You are nothing more than a disposable commodity, and you know that." Lieutenant Walewski lowered his voice. "If you don't comply, you'll come to regret it in a few hours." He looked towards the now defeated Gerard Sartre and smiled. "So, speak up."

Reluctantly, Gerard gulped and obliged.

#

"There. Wasn't so hard, was it, Mr. Sartre?"

Gerard's head was low. He did not respond. Shut up, he thought to himself.

"Well then, I'll be off," Lieutenant Walewski finished.

As the lieutenant left, Gerard clenched his fist and sat down in his chair. Though he did it to protect his daughter, feelings of guilt welled up in his stomach. He rested his forehead against his hand, pinching it with two fingers, and sighed. His daughter appeared into the room, skipping and twirling excitedly in her new blouse, as Colette followed from behind. Looking up, Gerard did his best to feign a smile.

"You and your business mean nothing to us."



“Sheep Made with White Charcoal”

By Caitlin Hanson

A letter to my Love

By Laquisha Turner

Dear Darlene,

My one true Love. What's wrong with me? It's been 5 years, 6 months, 22 days, 6 hours, and 23 minutes, yet I refuse to move on. Even now, as I walk the same spot on the beach you jogged for the last 15 years of your life, I can't forget about you. Even now, as I'm strolling the beach, twirling my red wedding band I refuse to take off, staring at the pictured necklace you gave me. You blessed me with an amazing life. You filled it with memories that transcend any afterlife. I miss your hugs and gentle touches. I even kept your Girl Scout Council badge. I treasure the things you left me with. Our children, Brandon, Percy, and Anna, miss you. However, they tell me you'd want me to live happily. I know you would. You've always cared about the happiness of others. You sacrificed so much to become who you are. Meeting you on that first day, I promised myself I'd take away the stress. I'd handle the problems so you could focus on being happy and being you. Since then, a day hadn't gone by when you didn't make me smile. I can't imagine anyone replacing this, and why would I? The pressure is making me crack. Are all the others right? Should I have moved on by now? Is that the final stage of grief? I may be alone, but I'm not lonely. We've gone through a lifetime of happiness, building memories, and smiling. Even now, as I start to sweat, I remember the time you bought foam heads for Brandon's first and last basketball game. Even though he sucked and rode the bench the entire time, you cheered and supported him from the stands. Even now, as I'm losing feeling in my arm and have dropped the photo, I remember the time Percy won the State Wrestling Tournament. You cried real tears and made sure to take him out to eat, telling everyone. Even now, as I'm falling and can't manage to get up, I think of the time you spent weeks dress shopping with Anna and got her dressed. You looked so proud. Even now, as I lay here having a heart attack, I regret nothing. I smile at the thought of joining you, my Love. See you soon.

Sincerely,

your beloved husband

"I can't forget about you."



“Cloth Over Mannequin”

By Caitlin Hanson

Love

By Delani Almeida

When all else fails, there's one thing that prevails
A force within that never fades away,
Even when it's given away
Something so strong that it could kill
Yet so powerful and soft that it can heal
An energy that is within us all
But some still search for high and tall

Draining themselves to find somewhere to look
They miss that searching themselves is all that it took
But once it is found like treasure in the sand,
The immense greatness lies in the palm of their hand
A gift directly given from the powers up above
A gift so great, it can only be L.O.V.E.

*"When all else fails, there's one thing
that prevails"*

Self-Love

By Delani Almeida

The self-love that courses through my body is a feeling I can't explain
A feeling that could never reside in a place of vain
A feeling that I can only hope will forever remain
Even if at days it may not always feel the same

It fulfills me so great that it flows endlessly from within
And pours onto another showering them with lovin'
This blesses them with the beauty of their own grin
And then the cycle restarts and begins

For self-love is an act of service, for the greatest good of all
A grace you can only reach when you break down the walls
And use the dust and debris to build back what you mauled
But this time the difference is you will be mighty, strong, and tall

So filled with yourself that you can only overflow
Into another's garden to water and help them grow
Picking the harvest in which you reap what you sow
And loving the crops no matter the rain, sleet, or snow.

*"But this time the difference is you will be mighty,
strong, and tall"*



“Untitled 2”

By Curtis Lankford

****Content Warning:**

The following work explores the theme of violence, which some readers may find potentially disturbing or distressing.

Excerpt from To Repay a Favor: Mizukume's Sins

By Noah Curran

It was once a grand court.

Constructed with architecture once considered impossible, the palace had stood proud for centuries up until that fateful week. Decorating the hallway walls were paintings and sculptures of past leaders, leaders that laid the groundwork for the kingdom Kalmashapada stood on today. There was one empty slot that still needed a painting for him, one that he desired to earn himself.

Denizens came daily to sing their praises, and they glorified Kalmashapada, for they believed he would be the one to guarantee Magadha its future. They all echoed the same sentiment:

All hail Kalmashapada! Our future burns bright!

And he, too, had believed it.

He was a proud, ambitious ruler in a magnificent palace, overlooking a hopeful nation.

And yet now that hope had dissipated entirely, replaced only by resentment, grief, and rioting in the streets. Surrounding Kalmashapada was the air of guilt as well as torn flesh and bones of the young scattered around him. Kneeling on the blood-stained marble floor, he held a corpse. A mutilated, unrecognizable, disfigured body that he once called his son.

He mourned and lamented over his mistake, cursing at himself. He gently laid his son down and turned towards his wife's imposter, that golden-furred beast that brought him down, and stared at her, his eyes radiating in defiance. He knew he couldn't defeat her. He had never encountered a rakshasa that powerful.

He quavered. "What...do you even gain from this?"

The beast didn't respond. He didn't expect her to either.

The guilty air around him began to condense in the form of his tears. The guilt began to take on a physical form, too—that of the damaged sword at his side. Though ineffective against that beast, the blade was still sharp enough to pierce human skin. A punishment Kalmashapada himself deemed suitable.

"Our future burns bright!"



“Pomegranates”

By Caitlin Hanson

Curiosity

By Breanna Moeller

Curiosity killed the cat, you know,
As the old saying goes.
Well, why do you suppose?
Did it see too much?
Do too much?
Did it go too far?
Was it therefore eliminated?

Curiosity may have killed the cat,
But I'd say satisfaction brought him back.
For to look is to find wonder,
To question is to find truth,
To think is to find answers.
For to be curious is to be alive,
Being curious is seeing stars,
Where others may only see dots on a wall.

Curiosity may have killed the cat,
But you know knowledge never truly dies.
It changes,
And comes back with a new look,
But it is always out there,
Waiting for a curious creature to uncover it,
Be it an old book or tome,
Or a page found in the corner drawer.

Curiosity killed the cat, you know,
For he found his answers,
But I would say the satisfaction,
Did indeed bring him back.

"But you know knowledge never truly dies."



“Lost in Time”

By Rachel M. Cordero

Contributors

Delani Almeida

Delani Almeida is a student pursuing business finance transferring to University of North Carolina Wilmington. Her poems not only act as a creative expression of herself, but unite her with connection to source, flowing through her.

Rachel M. Cordero

Rachel M. Cordero says that photography is her heart and soul. The one thing that made sense. Her first camera was Hello Kitty, and it could only take three pictures at a time. Since then, she has always had a camera, her life force, attached to her hip.

Noah Curran

Noah Curran is a student at Coastal Carolina Community College.

Caitlin Hanson

Caitlin Hanson is a college-age artist in Richlands, North Carolina, pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Illustration. Since childhood she's been working towards landing a career in the animation industry — with side interests in the world of both comic books and video games alike. These pieces are the products of that journey.

Elizabeth Humphrey

Elizabeth Humphrey is a college student studying History. She was born and raised in Jacksonville, North Carolina. In the future, she hopes to be an Archivist/Historian and a published Young Adult author. When she is not reading or writing, you can find her at the library, singing, or baking.

Alyssa Ickles

Alyssa Ickles is a student at Coastal Carolina Community College.

Curtis Lankford

Curtis Lankford is a student at Coastal Carolina Community College.

Breanna Moeller

Breanna Moeller is a 19-year-old student at Coastal Carolina Community College. She enjoys painting, writing, reading, hiking, traveling, and overall getting lost in her own head. She hopes to one day do something with herbalism, anthropology, or silversmithing.

Contributors

Jada Richardson

Jada Richardson is an 18-year-old student and a senior at Northside High School. She hopes to continue to share her work with the world.

Ariel Swinson

Ariel Swinson is a 21-year-old female whose autism shaped her life in numerous ways, even before she received the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) diagnosis.

Lakea “LoLo” Tucker

Lakea “LoLo” Tucker was born May 17, 1982, in Camden, New Jersey, and found solace in poetry at age ten. Writing became her passion, expressing love and sincerity. Adaptable and optimistic, her poems reflect her experiences. She believes in the power of her words to inspire and connect with others.

Laquisha Turner

Laquisha Turner is a full-time student at Coastal Carolina Community College and originally from Orlando, FL. Following graduation, she intends to further her education and earn a Bachelor’s degree in Marketing and Communication. Her fictional work opens a gateway to a different world purely through her writing.

New River Anthology

Coastal's Student Literary Magazine

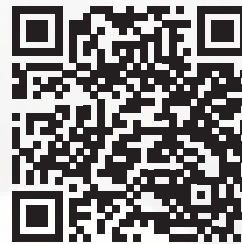
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SUBMISSIONS FOR 2025

Submission period ends March 31, 2025.

Submissions made after end date will be considered for the 2026 volume.



<https://www.coastalcarolina.edu/campus-life/student-showcase/>

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Poetry — up to 5 poems

Fiction/Nonfiction — up to 5 pieces of fiction or nonfiction, up to 15 pages per submission

Artwork — up to 5 scanned files of artwork or photographs

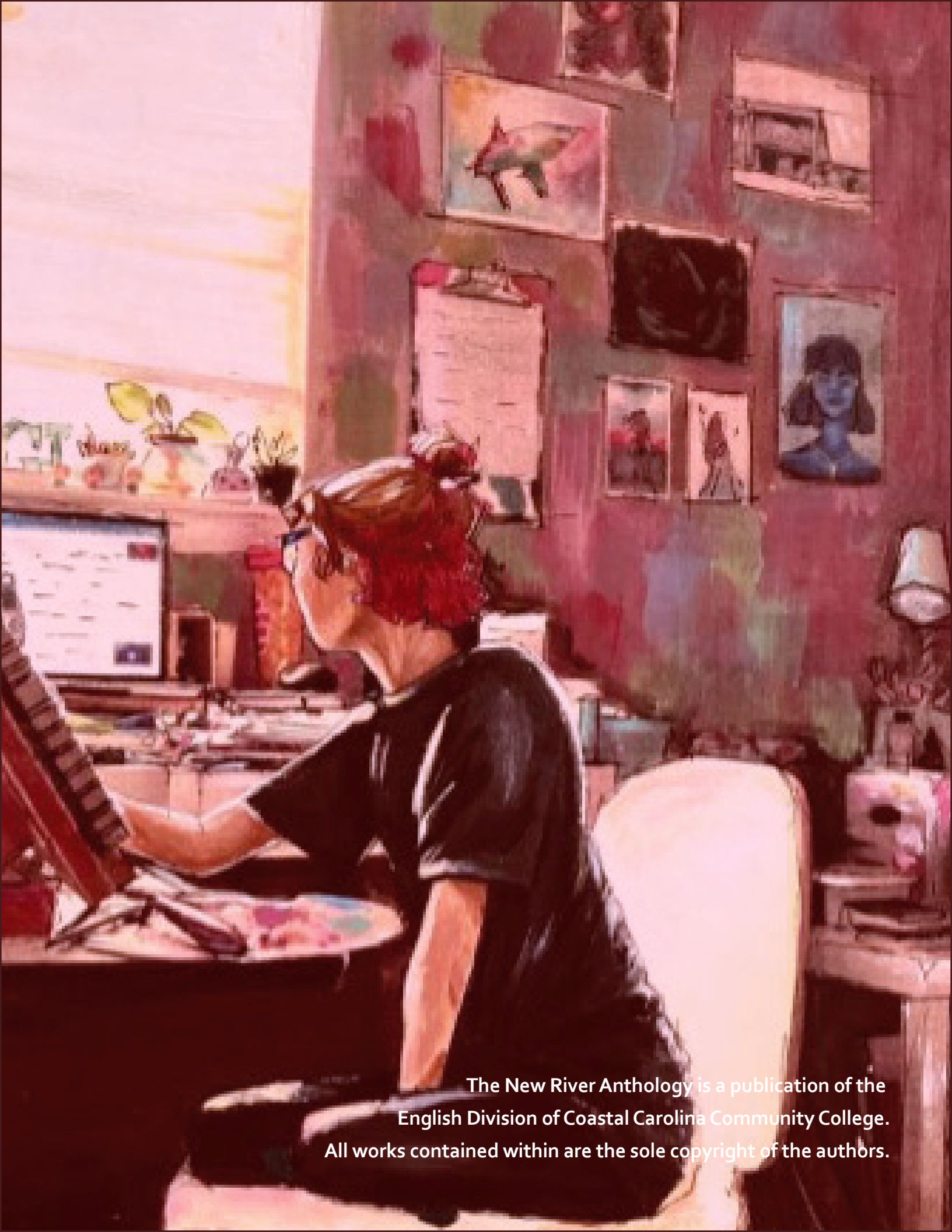
If you have any questions or concerns about submissions, please contact:

newriveranthology@coastalcarolina.edu

All work to be judged by the *New River Anthology* Faculty and Student Editors.

Notification of acceptance — June 2025 Anthology Distribution — November 2025





The New River Anthology is a publication of the
English Division of Coastal Carolina Community College.
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