

Never-Everland Country
by Ryan Harbert

Preschool preachers with lollipop doxologies,
 Sugar-sweet and “higher, higher!” on the swing set,
 Launching into Second Double-Dutch verses five through ten,
 Grades five through ten, ages five and under,
 With seesaw cell towers to broadcast gumballs and pratfalls
 On screens and pocket ant farms that plead “tap the glass,”
 Where pouts and rants and calico cats drift past
 In a blue-light bath of fifty likes, fifty views,
 Fifty cents worth of ad revenue, or less,
 Dead set and dying for newborn ideas a minute old,
 Or less -
 Lolita’d into beds and brains and chants of masses
 (Not the church kind) that Ave Maria their caped crusaders
 Into box-office blockbuster toddler fodder -
 All hail the Holy Grail turned sippy cup,
 The powder puff, the makeup tutorial glory be forevermore,
 Or nevermore, or whatever more – forever young
 And not about to die, that cotton-candy suicide hotline
 Linked below, as above, but not too far up
 Where little hands can’t reach the cookie jar
 That loaves-and-fishes out another treat,
 Or more -
 And Boomer flower children bloom, diaper clad
 Into the newest fad of “age defiance” –
 That protest march: signs up, time’s up,
 The twenty-four-hour cycle of birth and surgical not-birth,
 Burning sage to drive out the demons of work,
 Not play, that take away our toys and games,
 Our influencer Fame and other F-words
 Shouted at authority figures with duty in their shorts,
 Where thumb-in-mouth kills foot-in-mouth
 And fairytales stunt our outrage porn.

Until along come the strangers with candy in their vans.
 With long, gloved fingers and candy in their vans.