

Sarah Mackey Kirby

Paddling by the Cave

It was that day canoeing
by Mammoth Cave. Two girlfriends
plunging oars into Green River current.
The air rife with April and
afternoon weed. Boys from our class
sneaky and eager to share, to cement
foreshadow, their hope-drenched
return on a doobie-ous investment
we had no plan to pay back.

And oh how we laughed.
Drinking in the quiet last moments
before responsibility went viral
and a decade of weekend sleepovers,
tear-spectacle overreactions,
and leaning against oak bark,
legs stretched into twin pairs of sandals
slithered away.

That scorching Spring day as we
floated through soft rapids, rocks
small and air calm. But still
the thrill felt real.
Too naïve to hurt yet.
Transition's tranquility
masking cliché of last hurrah.
Before the years melted
and the sting of needing you set in.

Sarah Mackey Kirby is a Kentucky poet and writer. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in *Connecticut River Review*, *Front Porch Review*, *Impspired*, *Punk Noir*, *US News & World Report* and elsewhere. She holds an M.A. in Teaching and a B.A. in Political Science. She and her husband live in Louisville.