

## **Sarah Mackey Kirby**

### **I Left God at a Chevron in Cincy**

I wish I could say hunger is what did it.  
Or war. Or young women given to  
soldiers like prized cantaloupes,  
sweet for opening. But those old  
arguments, the stuff of cliché,  
of macro-world-sadness  
weren't enough. Not for me.

And I wish I could attribute it to logic  
bursting through clouds like warm  
summer rain dousing inconsistencies  
I'd always turned away from.  
Or unanswered prayers  
or unanswered whys.  
One too many cries  
or thighs stained midnight bruise.

Why it wasn't the day she died,  
I'll never know. Or when they  
called a code. Or yet another  
step without a breath. Or heart that  
won't beat right. Or a brain-bleed  
helicopter ride one Monday night.  
I can't explain.

I guess there are those who would  
say survival is the proof. Or people  
not God are the cause of such suffering.  
Such sin. Keep the faith. Pray. Pray. Pray.  
It's all part of a plan, specially designed  
for me. By Him.

I wish it was an epiphany,  
some clarifying moment. But no,  
just a doe on the highway. Splayed  
out under hot sunshine sky. What purpose  
was served for her to die. Like that. In so  
much pain. Who, with love, would do that.  
But still, she was only the preamble,  
the penultimate stanza. The truth, more  
selfish, more self-indulgent, maybe wrong.

I got gas right after at a Chevron  
near Cincinnati and realized how tired  
I was. Tired while walking.  
Tired of hurting.  
Tired of healing.  
Some days, tired of living  
and of pretending  
I'm not.  
I've not known  
for a while now what I believe.  
But I do know I'm tired  
of justifying to myself  
my putting more effort in  
than He ever put into me.

**Sarah Mackey Kirby** is a Kentucky poet and writer. She is the author of the poetry collection, *The Taste of Your Music (Inspired)*, (2021). Her work has been published or is forthcoming in *Ploughshares*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, *Chiron Review*, *The New Verse News*, *Boston Literary Magazine* and elsewhere. She holds an MA in teaching and a BA in political science from the University of Louisville. She and her husband live in Louisville. <https://smkirby.com/>