**burying a small dead snake in card canyon**

I kneel, as if in prayer,

over a shallow hole I dug

with the heel of my boot.

My friend kneels

beside me, all four inches

of a slick yellow snake

draped across her hands.

If each of its eyes

did not look like a small

and starless universe,

I could pretend

it is only motionless

like the statues of maples

awaiting a cool gust

to loosen their leaves

throbbing red

with the loss of summer.

I know if she neglects

to bury this snake,

slugs and pillbugs

will ingest

and shit out

its remains,

and if she buries it,

slugs and pillbugs

will still ingest

and shit out its remains.

She uncups her hands

and lets the snake

slip into the soil.

How silly it all is,

but I let her proceed

with this burial

of an insignificant

creature like it’s the burial

of a significant other.

I don’t need to say anything.

The sky spits rain

to rinse scales, rinse

cartilage, rinse tongue,

tooth, trachea,

and stomach.

**Snow Hike**

Because it gets lonely,

sitting on my couch avoiding

everything outside

the gas-heated bubble

of my apartment, so I take

a midwinter hike on the old

juniper trail where snowflakes

drop like stars

in freefall.

I let myself fall

away from the bootpacked

trail into an infinity of white

because I know the snowscape

will resculpt itself to cup

the numb shape of my body,

hold me like a mother

holds her baby.

For the first time

in a long time,

I feel held, sagebrush

resting beneath me,

fragrant junipers

folding above.

I lie

in snow, each flake

dissolving like a teardrop

into the warm pink

of my cheeks.

An enthusiast of philosophy, ***Jay Paine*** often overindulges in existentialism. When he’s not grappling with the meaning of life, you can find him penning a poem underneath a bigtooth maple. Jay is currently working on his undergrad at Utah State University, where he serves as a poetry editor for *Sink Hollow: An Undergraduate Literary Magazine.* Some of his work appears in the *Roadrunner Review.*