

D . A . G R A Y

Negative Space

Again
it's two a.m.
Fresh linens roll themselves
into a garrote, or the body
beneath an avalanche
of white sand and there is only
this end
and the other.

At two a.m.
the mattress forms a crater
and sleep becomes
a trench warfare of its own.
For seconds, the body
finds a cool corner of bed,
and drifts, until dreams
of desert sun and terra cotta
carry me out.

That's the time
you look my way smiling.
I can never understand what
there is to smile about and then

you turn your head. Red petals
open into full blossom -
an exit wound in back
of your mind.
Your smile becomes a vacant
beam and air stumbles,
rasping, over a bone cage
in its hurry to leave.

It is sunny in the desert,
and my wife's two a.m.
voice asks who I'm talking
to. She lays spooned
against a shifting dune.

I think my ride is here, you say,
and then the whirring rotors confirm.

It's two a.m.
and the unmistakable blades
of a Blackhawk slice through
the air. A brass chain
scrapes in the blades
and your voice from the rotor
asks in machine gun rhythm
me - to save it -

and I'm falling upward.

D.A. GRAY spends his time as a full-time graduate student at Texas A&M-Central Texas in the spring and fall, and as an MFA candidate at Sewanee School of Letters in the summer. He has published one book of poetry, *Overwatch*, and his work can also be found in *Grey Sparrow Journal*, *Poetry Salzburg*, *The Good Men Project*, *O'Dark Thirty*, *94 Creations*, and the upcoming *Sewanee Review*.