



# *IMPACT*

SARAH  
RENEE  
BEACH

Impact

Sundress Publications • Knoxville, TN

Copyright © 2023 by Sarah Renee Beach

ISBN: 978-1-951979-52-2

Published by Sundress Publications

[www.sundresspublications.com](http://www.sundresspublications.com)

Editor: Kathleen Gullion

Editorial Assistant: Kanika Lawton

Interns: Amber Alexander and Jillian A. Fantin

Colophon: This book is set in Josefin Sans.

Cover Art: Coral Sue Black

Cover Design: Coral Sue Black

Book Design: Kathleen Gullion

# Impact

Sarah Renee Beach





## Contents

The Language of Symmetry	9
[I don't remember]	10
Impact	14
Frida Kahlo Couldn't Paint It	16
My Mother Emails Her Prayer Group, Glues Them Into Her Journal	17
accident, <i>n.</i>	18
Dear "Lori Ann White, 41, of Silsbee,"	19
Navy Nike Shorts	20
[I remember the ER]	21
Dear Lori Ann White,	24
Hauntology	25
New Normal	26
E & I Hardly Speak Anymore	27
Lucky	28
Dear Lori Ann (or do you go by just Lori?),	29
[remember?]	30
Acknowledgements	34
About the Author	35



Though she painted death—her own metaphorically and that of others literally—Frida was not able to paint her accident. Years later, she said that she had wanted to, but couldn't because to her, the accident was too "complicated" and "important" to reduce to a single comprehensible image. There is only an undated drawing... Its brusque, crude draftsmanship suggests the subject provoked so much distress that Frida could not control her line.

—Hayden Herrera, *Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo*



## The Language of Symmetry

My structure displeases because of its  
lack of harmony, its unfitness.  
–Frida Kahlo

Halves halved exquisitely  
harmonious form mirror  
mirroring balance scaled  
precision when rotated  
another portion of perfect  
across the axis see me  
fold over flatly  
and fill myself  
with self so even  
sides touch and edges  
smooth themselves.

Place me on the table  
and pour liquid  
into me; see how still  
I fill. Exemplary  
geometry. Isotropic  
existence. Sleep and dream  
of monarch wings. Outline  
in chalk atop the two-lane road.  
Antenna curved away  
from antenna curve.  
Find me  
there, splayed.



1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

[REDACTED]

A. I don't remember.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A. I don't know.

[REDACTED]

A. I don't remember.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A. I don't remember.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

DEFENSE COUNSEL: Sweetie, we can't hear you at all.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A. It was raining, yes.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

A. I don't remember.

[REDACTED]

A. I don't remember.

[REDACTED]

A. I don't remember.

[REDACTED]

A. I don't know.

[REDACTED]

A. I don't know.

[REDACTED]

Q. Tell me about that. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A. I don't remember.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A. I don't remember.

Q. Do you know [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] that the accident  
happened?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Did it seem like a matter of minutes?

[REDACTED] I don't remember.

[REDACTED] Okay, that you [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

## Impact

as in two objects colliding

as in for every action there's an equal and opposite reaction

as in a blackout

as in asphalt and flesh

as in a muddy ditch of ants

as in rain and a road

as in bodies rolled

as in strangers with umbrellas

as in waking up in the ICU

as in my name on the news

as in no visitors allowed

as in five am finger pricks

as in multiple wound vacs

as in bedside bags of urine, blood, debris

as in surgeries, stitches, sponge baths, seizures, IVs to the neck

as in "I thought I saw your brain"

as in "we heard you lost your ear"

as in "I remember your screams in the ER"

as in “thank god your face was spared”

as in “I couldn’t tell you until I knew you’d pull through”

as in “she’s gone”

as in watching a funeral on DVD

as in morphine drip

as in Demerol

as in PT

as in PTSD

as in therapy

as in EMDR

as in “don’t forget to warn the stylist about the scar on your scalp”

as in a mid-conversation glance at a shoulder

as in “what happened to your arms”

as in an event tattooed on my body

as in branded by pity

as in rumors about me, what I can still do



## Frida Kahlo Couldn't Paint It

There's a violence in the vacancy,  
in what the canvases could not show:  
a scream heard over sirens, a bloody body  
glistening and somehow gold.  
She changed her birthday, dropped the "e,"  
mythed herself into a semblance of self-control.  
A broken column,  
but her eyes do not wince,  
her face stoic atop the double scroll.  
A dereliction originating from a disturbance  
so unnerving a paintbrush can't ever know.  
Memory mystifies even the words strung together,  
explanations morphed and hollow.  
I remember our debriefing,  
the comprehension of events escaping me.  
I could not remember a true, crystalline thing,  
shaking with grief at the unknowing,  
at the images both haunting and eluding me.  
A day forever changing everything and yet—  
what is there is wrong, made up,  
my mind's necromancy.  
I thought I saw Ashley sleeping soundly,  
her head resting unsmashed  
against the back of the seat.

My Mother Emails Her Prayer Group, Glues Them Into Her Journal

Thurs 3/30/06

Yesterday, Sarah's soccer team was on their way to Houston for a game in bad weather and there was a terrible crash. Sarah was severely injured but is going to survive. She has a large hole in her skull where her left ear was. They did reconstructive surgery last night on her scalp and ear. She also has a chunk of her left shoulder gone including some bones and nerves. The tendon on one arm is severed. She has an injury and so many lacerations on her forearms that they put her in casts on both arms to keep her from moving them. The girls were covered with mud and blood, grass, glass and fire ants. The surgeons were finally trying to clean out all of her wounds and will do more surgeries probably on Fri. Sarah was coherent and talking after surgery. She does not yet realize the extent of her injuries. Her main wounds will be emotional though. Her best friend in the world was Ashley Brown and she was pinned under the bus and died at the scene. Sarah doesn't know this yet. We will have to tell her today. Missy

3/31/06

Dear Prayer Warriors,

Sarah was a rough day. They said the 3rd day after an accident is the worse. Sarah has surgery this morning at 7:30 am to again clean her wounds of glass, grass, gravel etc. This is necessary before they begin any reconstructive surgery to try to prevent infection. The girls were very filthy from the accident. She also had an MRI in the afternoon because of pretty severe neck pain. We will not get results until tomorrow. She then was medicated with morphine for the pain and slept the rest of the day, until about 3pm when she woke up and wanted water, jello, chapstick and medicine for her fire ant bites. We all gladly ran around fulfilling all her wishes, glad to see a spark of the "old" Sarah back. She had not talked or moved much since learning of her best friends death the day before. Tomorrow the physical therapists will try to get her up for the first time. On Tues she is scheduled to have surgery again with the hand surgeon evaluating how to "reel" tendons from other places to repair her thumb and wrist. I think they will do skin grafts another day to cover various wounds, on shoulder, arms etc. She has some kind of vacuum device on all of her wounds that sucks out any drainage and promotes healing. This is a marvelous invention that promotes healing and helps ward off infection. No one has really said yet how they will repair the damage to her scalp. It is too large to heal on its own and will require either a graft or them some how cutting a flap from existing flesh and stretching it over the wound. None of that sounds good to me, but will take one day if I can. She will require 3 or more surgeries for all of these doctors to do their various things on her. We appreciate all of your calls, cards, emails etc. We are trying to make a book for Sarah with all of this in it so that Sarah can have it to look at when she feels well enough. She is very alert mentally and has no internal injuries or broken bones. We are thankful. She remains in ICU and can have no visitors except immediate family. She needs quiet and alot of rest. We are in need of nothing right now, but we do covet your prayers, they are working. All of her injuries are fixable with God's grace. Missy Beach

**accident, n.**

*/'æksədnt/*

1. an unforeseen event or one without an apparent cause

“At least a dozen were injured in the accident...”

2. a misfortune or mishap, especially one causing injury or death

“Alicia Bonura, 18, and Ashley Brown, 16, were killed in the March 29 accident...”

3. such a happening resulting in injury that is in no way the fault of the injured person

“Police said the driver of the pickup, who was hauling a flatbed of the foam, didn't realize he might have caused the accident...”

As in:

accident prevention accident proof accident report accident site accident statistic accident victim accident record accident damage accident investigation without accident freak accident accident waiting to happen

accidents will happen

Antonym:

intent

Dear "Lori Ann White, 41, of Silsbee,"

"I forgive you" is what I should've said when you walked over and told me, "I'm so sorry."

I remember your face as clearly as I remember my arms, how chunks of flesh were mysteriously gone, leaving crater shapes.

It's the collision I forget, but your eyes wide—reflecting the shreds of my ear all butchered like hamburger meat—I've remembered just fine.

Horizontal on the highway, cold rain diluting the warm blood pooling on the asphalt, I'll always think back to your hair, how your long braid dangled as you bent over me.

It's ghoulish how the memory of you has stood unscathed in the churning of the past ten years, which is why, when the *Houston Chronicle* article I found just yesterday—the one saying I was "more fortunate" because my ear had been reattached—called you by name, I read it again and again and again.

I never knew you as Lori with age and place, only as the woman who said sorry before I or my parents or the investigators or the lawyers thought to use the word blame.

What I'm trying to say is I know it wasn't your fault you swerved, lost control of the bus. You couldn't have known the debris was harmless, practically weightless

foam.

## Navy Nike Shorts

The paramedics didn't cut mine off,  
slid them carefully down my legs instead.  
We discussed who got to keep them,  
could still fold them in a drawer.  
Our favorite soccer uniform shorts,  
the ones we put on expecting to end up at a match.  
I'd never kept a contract stating  
*careful don't wear, careful don't part with.*  
An arbitration between what's lost and what remains—  
Their untatteredness weighs like a presence,  
their presence a loan.

1 [REDACTED]  
2 A. I remember [REDACTED]  
3 [REDACTED] the ER [REDACTED] my Dad [REDACTED]  
4 [REDACTED] his  
5 face [REDACTED] asked me  
6 what hurt.  
7 [REDACTED] Mom and Dad [REDACTED]  
8 [REDACTED]  
9 [REDACTED]  
10 [REDACTED] found out [REDACTED]  
11 [REDACTED]  
12 [REDACTED]  
13 [REDACTED]  
14 [REDACTED]  
15 [REDACTED]  
16 [REDACTED]  
17 [REDACTED]  
18 [REDACTED]  
19 [REDACTED]  
20 [REDACTED] they [REDACTED] were [REDACTED]  
21 [REDACTED]  
22 [REDACTED]  
23 [REDACTED] told [REDACTED]  
24 [REDACTED]  
25 [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

[redacted] about [redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted] the [redacted]  
[redacted] chunks out of my [redacted]  
knuckles. [redacted] the [redacted] chunks out of my  
arm [redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted] the [redacted] chunk out of [redacted]  
(indicating) [redacted]  
[redacted] right  
shoulder [redacted]  
[redacted] my scalp [redacted]  
[redacted] sheared off [redacted]  
[redacted] (lifting hair, showing) [redacted] down  
to my skull. And my ear [redacted] ripped  
off [redacted] barely attached [redacted]  
[redacted]  
And my shoulder [redacted] bone [redacted]  
[redacted] out [redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]

[redacted]  
[redacted]

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The [REDACTED] cuts [REDACTED].

The [REDACTED] chunk out of my wrist [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q. Let me see your wrist, please.

A. (Showing) The [REDACTED] tendon severed [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] And the [REDACTED] chunk out of my right knee.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] YES

Q. [REDACTED]

you [REDACTED] break [REDACTED] we know

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] your Dad, [REDACTED] your Mom [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] too?

A. I [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] recall [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] at some point they did [REDACTED].

[REDACTED] & ASSOCIATES  
[REDACTED] CSO, RPR-RMR-ORR

**Dear Lori Ann White,**

I found another article about you. This one was nestled between “Devastated soccer team withdraws from playoffs” and “Hundreds gather at vigil to remember two teens.”

Your brother told *The Beaumont Enterprise* reporter, “She wishes it was her instead of them,” which is a nice sentiment I hadn’t heard before.

Stories about you were whispered to me in the ICU: you’d been in drug rehab once or twice, were driving too fast, should’ve pulled over. But no one told me you’d been “[driving] commercially for at least six years” or that your brother “thought [your] driving record was excellent.” He even mentioned that you left home early enough to “check the oil, tire pressure and other bus maintenance items before picking up the students.”

To be honest, I’d never lingered over the magnitude of your remorse, only catalogued your rumored mistakes as I heard them, filed them among details I’d maybe revisit sometime after my catheter could be removed.

I didn’t blame you. “Fault” wasn’t one of the words I made room for in my hospital bed or used as encouragement between morphine drips. The significance didn’t unravel until years later, when it ricocheted off the walls of a boardroom. One of the 14 seated attorneys had placed it on the tip of my tongue.

I told them you said you were sorry. The detail, new and fatigue-delivered, prompted follow-up questions like, how did I think you “operated the bus” and whether or not anyone at the scene of the accident said it was “the bus driver’s fault.” To these I replied “I don’t remember” for the 96th and 97th time, respectively.

I see in the article that you “declined to comment on the advice of the company’s lawyer.” I can’t help but wonder what you would have said, what you would have wanted known.

## Hauntology

1.

Of rain is the pall,  
virulent mists  
huddled  
heavy  
of clouds  
drained

Obsessive, ghosts  
come collect  
in pools  
surface tension  
frame

2.

Wraiths sleet down splash up stream across the sidewalk seep into  
soil soak the bedrock with the drenched dream of echoes  
You dream you will be dead  
It feels good to be wet with name

3.

Mirrored puddle  
darkness  
impending pour  
scarcely contained

**New      Normal**

There was something	exhibitionistic
about the posters	taped outside
lockers of students	she barely knew
They said RIP	Ashley
under pictures found	on MySpace
many of them featuring my face	next to hers
I'm not sorry	I tore them all
	down

## E & I Hardly Speak Anymore

I remember your screams,  
E said as she passed me the joint. Before  
you were out, they touched you  
all over, seeing what hurt  
the most. I don't remember that,  
I exhaled along with the smoke. Why  
were you in the same room? They ran  
out of space in the ER and had to double up,  
she explained, glancing back  
through the window at the muted din.  
It's the clearest memory I have of that day.  
I hear it in my sleep. I'm sorry,  
I said and sipped from my Solo cup.



## Lucky

She would have fucked him had her dad not been awake,  
ripped open the truck door and said, "Get your ass inside."

She slept with him before in the Ferguson's pool house,  
the smell of Evan Williams making syrup of the air.

This time cheap vodka, Sonic Strawberry Limeade leaving  
pink chunks she would try to clean off her boots the next day.

He had been one of many attempts at absolving herself,  
in her warped body but no more zero-to-ten pain.

Pulled from the wreckage, receptacle for words like *strong* and *brave*,  
she recited her lines when prompted, his fingers hesitating over a scar—

"I'm one of the lucky ones. So thankful to still be alive."  
Her name means *God's Princess*, says the ceramic heart

suspended from pink ribbon, cracked but still nailed to the bedroom wall.  
The heart quivered each time I escaped over the sill and under the pane.

**Dear Lori Ann (or do you go by just Lori?),**

Last week, Traci asked me if I knew what happened to you. You may not remember, but she's the one who helped me off the bus, who sat by me until the ambulances came, blood dripping down the sides of her face. She remembers everything. Knows how the impact felt. Tried to lift Ashley's body but couldn't.

She'd been sitting between us, you know. Three to two seats as we watched *Dude, Where's My Car*. Sometimes, I think that Ashley's and my body protected Traci, limiting her injuries to a concussion, a now faded scar on her forehead that would flush when we drank vodka from Sonic cups after school. Other times, I think it could've been the weight of both Traci and me that killed Ashley, adding to the blow of her head on the ground.

Anyway, I told her no. I was surprised she had been wondering about you, too. She couldn't find you on Facebook. Thinks maybe you changed your name. Moved to Garland. That night, I spent an hour searching an online Southeast Texas database half expecting something tragic. You weren't there. You aren't anywhere. Which is for the best, I guess. I still don't know what I'd do if I ever found you. Maybe I'd ask whether or not you remember everything, too.

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

Q. [REDACTED] remember [REDACTED] ?

A. No.

Q. [REDACTED] remember [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] lying on [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the road?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] you [REDACTED] there?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A. I [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I'm [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] looking --

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] you said [REDACTED] was by you [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] about [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

Q. [REDACTED] you remember [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] you know how you [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] break, tell me.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

A. (Weeping) I'm [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] covered in blood [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] blood

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] everywhere [REDACTED] blood [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

1 Q. [REDACTED] remember [REDACTED] screaming?

2 A. No.

3 Q. [REDACTED] remember [REDACTED]

4 [REDACTED] lying on the side [REDACTED]

5 [REDACTED] of the road?

6 A. Yes.

7 [REDACTED]

8 [REDACTED]

9 [REDACTED]

10 [REDACTED]

11 [REDACTED]

12 Q. Remember, [REDACTED] break, tell [REDACTED].

13 A. (Witness moving head up and down)

14 [REDACTED]

15 [REDACTED]

16 [REDACTED]

17 [REDACTED]

18 [REDACTED]

19 A. [REDACTED]

20 [REDACTED] she had blood

21 running down her face; [REDACTED] I remember [REDACTED]

22 [REDACTED]

23 [REDACTED]

24 [REDACTED]

25 [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] She said, "Sarah, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Ashley is still in the bus." [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Q. [REDACTED] you remember [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] what happened

[REDACTED] next, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to the editors of *White Wall Review* in which earlier versions of the poems "Dear Lori Ann White, 41, of Silsbee," and "Lucky" first appeared.

## About the Author



Originally from Southeast Texas, Sarah Renee Beach completed her MFA at The New School. Her poetry can be found in *White Wall Review*, *Rust + Moth*, and anthologized in Host Publications' *I Scream Social Anthology Vol. 2*. She currently lives in Austin, TX. More information about her work may be found at [sarahreneebeach.com](http://sarahreneebeach.com).



## Other E-Chap Titles from Sundress

*Lessons in Bending*  
Jonaki Ray

*Machete Moon*  
Arielle Cottingham

*for the joy of it*  
anaïs peterson

*Dela Torre*  
Dani Putney

*I Know the Origin of My Tremor*  
Ugochukwu Damian Okpara

Other E-Chap titles can be found at  
[www.sundresspublications.com/e-chaps](http://www.sundresspublications.com/e-chaps)