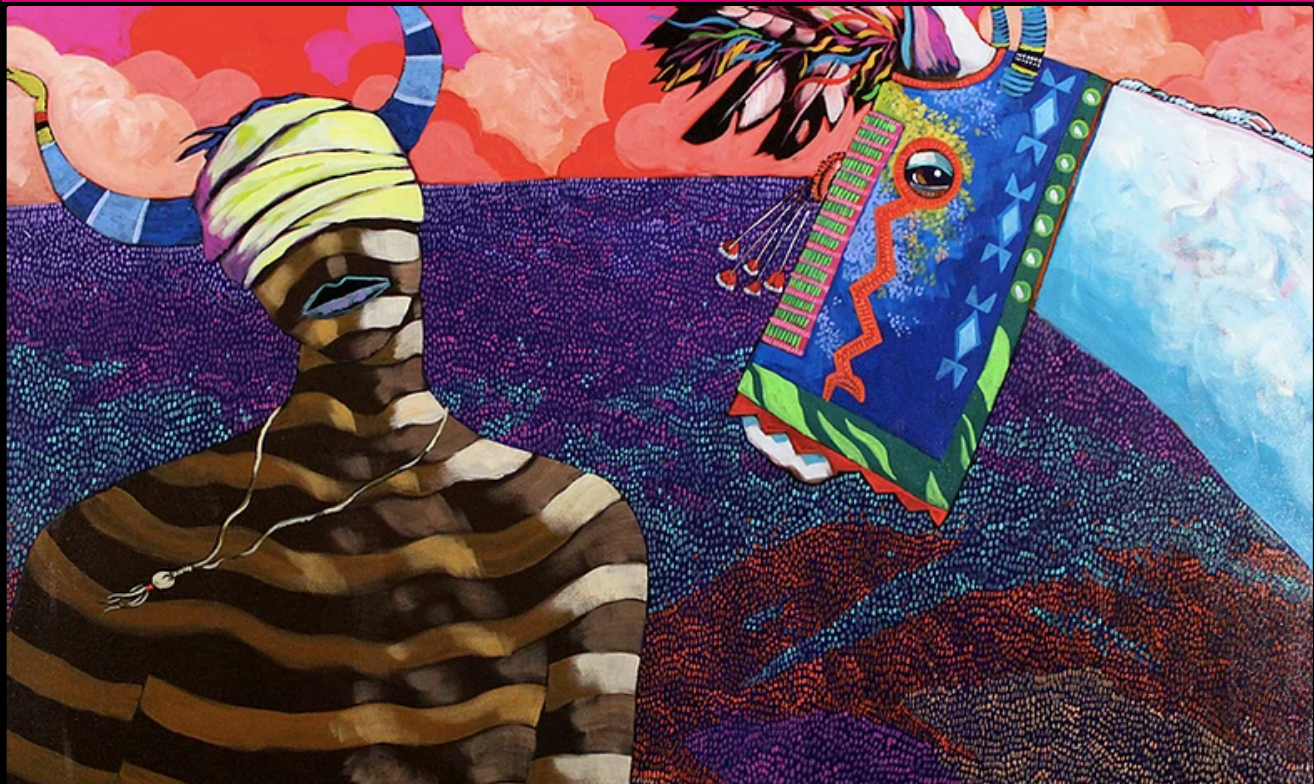


If Not Thirst

Sarah Aronson



If Not Thirst

Then this blood-crescent welling
in a trout's small eye. The heart

so near the jaw. The water tasted
thin. I kept wrapping my hand

around my own throat. That same
spot on the river called me back.

For weeks it was meltwater
then forest fire. A patch of sun

scalping golden trees. Culling

the understory from the berries,

white spiders crawl out. A crow
wings from the southwest at sunset.

We exchange
in murmurations.

I take in what your good eyes
render. Press my finger to the page,

the page folds, becomes the stalk of grass
I put in my mouth to whistle you back.



Sarah Aronson writes poems and essays from Missoula, MT. Her work can be found in the *Portland Review*, *Yemassee*, and *Cirque* among others. She is also the host of the Montana Public Radio program and podcast, *The Write Question*.

