

Winter 2021

## How to Behead a Snake

Ben Kline

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank>

**Let us know how access to this document benefits you.**

---

### Recommended Citation

Kline, Ben (2021) "How to Behead a Snake," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 95 , Article 4.  
Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss95/4>

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in CutBank by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@mso.umt.edu](mailto:scholarworks@mso.umt.edu).

BEN KLINE

---

## HOW TO BEHEAD A SNAKE

- *Winner: Patricia Goedicke Prize in Poetry* -

---

Do fifty push-ups. Saunter  
like your uncle showed you  
to the sunbathing garter's tail.

Grab it—audacity enthralls  
city kids, girlfriends, the bullies  
throwing rocks at the goats.

Shake it to confusion, dodging  
bite—an absence of venom  
lessens no pain. Twirl it

until it's a corkscrew ribbon  
and someone says Oooo.  
Take a deep breath. Wipe

any sweat on your jeans—never  
try it in shorts or a swimsuit.  
Crack it like a wet whip,

snapping between your knees—  
a loose flick yanked into your chest.  
Someone will always yell Oh shit

and at least two people will puke  
when the snake's head pops  
clean off its glottis—

unblinking eyes scatter  
like marbles the nearby cats  
kick around until the football players

return to the bus. Toss the carcass  
in the weeds. Sit in the seat  
behind the driver, under her mirror,

where she can't see you slipping  
tips down your pants, dodging  
the beating you took last time.