

Black Sheep

You don't want to come to our party,
you say. No one here knows you
even though we all grew up together
in the same home. No one understands
how being with us feels

like ice melting under your collar—
like trying to hold back off-color
laughter in a funeral room—
like shifting on a pristine chair
in grease-stained coveralls.

You think we are whole without you,
a complete panel of magistrates
already in possession of a verdict.
But I am not

judging you—I am judging

the lay of the land. I am
plumbing the valleys and chasms
between us, plotting how to hurl
myself across and lay hold
before you run.

— *Merrijane Rice*

This poem was a finalist in the 2024 BYU Studies Poetry Contest.