



Sunshine State: Essays

Sarah Gerard

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Rising literary star and *Los Angeles Times* First Fiction Award finalist Sarah Gerard uses her experiences growing up along Florida's gulf coast to illuminate the struggles of modern human survival—physical, emotional, environmental—through a collection of essays exploring intimacy, addiction, obsession, religion, homelessness, and incarceration.

With the personal insight of *The Empathy Exams*, the societal exposé of *Nickel and Dimed*, and the stylistic innovation and intensity of her own break-out debut novel *Binary Star*, Sarah Gerard's *Sunshine State* uses the intimately personal to unearth the deep reservoirs of humanity buried in the corners of our world often hardest to face.

In the collection's title essay, Gerard volunteers at the Suncoast Seabird Sanctuary, a world renowned bird refuge. There she meets its founder, who once modeled with a pelican on his arm for a Dewar's Scotch campaign but has since declined into a pit of fraud and madness. He becomes our embezzling protagonist whose tales about the birds he "rescues" never quite add up. Gerard's personal stories are no less eerie or poignant: An essay that begins as a look at Gerard's first relationship becomes a heart-wrenching exploration of acquaintance rape and consent. An account of intimate female friendship pivots midway through, morphing into a meditation on jealousy and class.

Sunshine State offers a unique look at Florida, a state whose economically and environmentally imperiled culture serves as a lens through which we can examine some of the most pressing issues haunting our nation.

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