

Sitting Around The Table

A Collection of Poems

By Jonah Barton





PREFACE

I'm very grateful to share with you my first small collection of poems *Sitting Around The Table*. The process of writing, workshopping, and editing these poems throughout the semester has been an extremely rewarding experience. Thank you to those close to me who've put up with my involuntary poetry readings and remained my friend despite it. A special thanks to professor A. H. Jerriod Avant for providing me with the tools to build these poems and the tools to find the joy in the process.



CONTENTS

- I. Landlubber
- II. Mardi Gras and The Sky Before Katrina
- III. Sitting Around The Table
- IV. Ode To Hank
- V. July, A Fawn

Landlubber

After sweet potatoes
and dead deer,
past the wood burning stove,
you walked me up to your room till
there was no one.

It was there, that Thursday,
that you showed me the
ocean you liked to keep in your
front jean pocket.

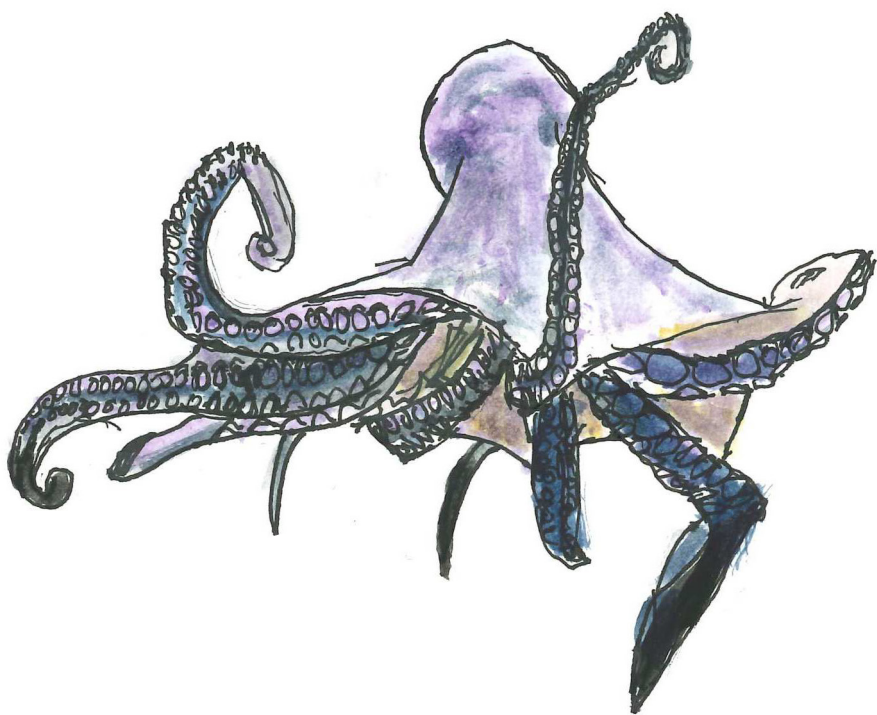
I asked you how long it'd be till
the whole thing spilled down your leg,
water collapsing to the floor, an octopus
wrapping itself around your ankle, a
loose coral gashing the flesh of your thigh.

We'd stand in water rushing
up our bodies, seawater soaking
the wool sweater you once knit for me,
anchoring my feet to your floor till
my lungs were filled exactly.

In stillness, your mandolin would fill
and sink, sitka spruce now soft
to the touch, its strings
tied to rusty hooks, reeled in sea creatures
drifting to the ripples of a bluegrass ballad
lost along the way.

When I looked back up
at you, all I could see was your hair
floating above your head
the way seaweed does, breezy
and warm,

a smile drawn across your face,
as the waves kept crashing.



Mardi Gras And The Sky Before Katrina

On Tchoupitoulas and State
where the sweat falls
up instead of down,
I stood weaving through
the faces of pockets and purses,
their eyes carefully watching,
then winking at me
as I walked by.

They say Fat Tuesday
and the day holds.

The live oak breathes to
trombones and trumpets,
its crooked branches dressed in beads
purple, green, gold.
In a city of reunionists
I wore mine like a medal,
reflecting the sun just the same.

On pavement that cooks mighty
crawfish and corn, you held my hand
and we danced among
the creatures of New Orleans.

A man with no teeth smiles at me,
a troubadour, you say,
the last of his kind.
A skeleton

playing the tuba
marches by, brass washing
the paint off his face,
human under bone.

It was them, you said,
that I missed the most.



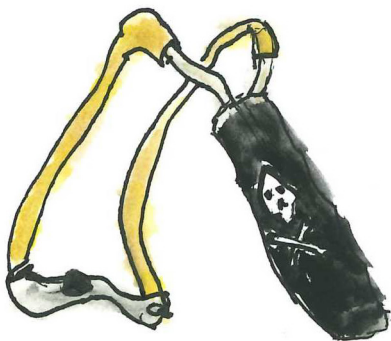
Sitting Around The Table

indigo falls mist
day folding her cards upon
wooden sighs and rue

Ode to Hank

Because of you,
I carry a flask of
gorilla glue, a small pair
of binoculars my mother
gave me, a roll of electrical tape,
one pair of scratchy
fingerless gloves,
a lighter, one thick
sharpie (king size), two spoons
for playing, the pocket
knife you helped me
pick out, a slingshot
and a felt pouch with
an orange button
for pebbles—ammunition.

Because of you,
I wander up the creek
till my boots are filled
and the sun uses its last
breath to widen the trees.



July, a Fawn

I found you dead
On the gravel of
My driveway

Tennessee Sun
Already melting
The spots off your fur
Like snowflakes
On the outstretched hand
Of a child

Blood drips down
Your cracked jaw
Tupelo honey
Painting the rocks
Dark and rich

A doe watches
From the top of the hill
And looks at you
One last time
Before I carry you away
In my arms

You are dead and
I am a man.

You are heavy
And your body does not negotiate
The way the living does.

20 paces
I lost your balance
And you fell forever.

Late that night
I would dream
That John Henry
Would hammer
A hole into the earth
The size of your skeleton

So later, when winter
Falls on the tall grass
I could sit with you
Under the sweetgum tree

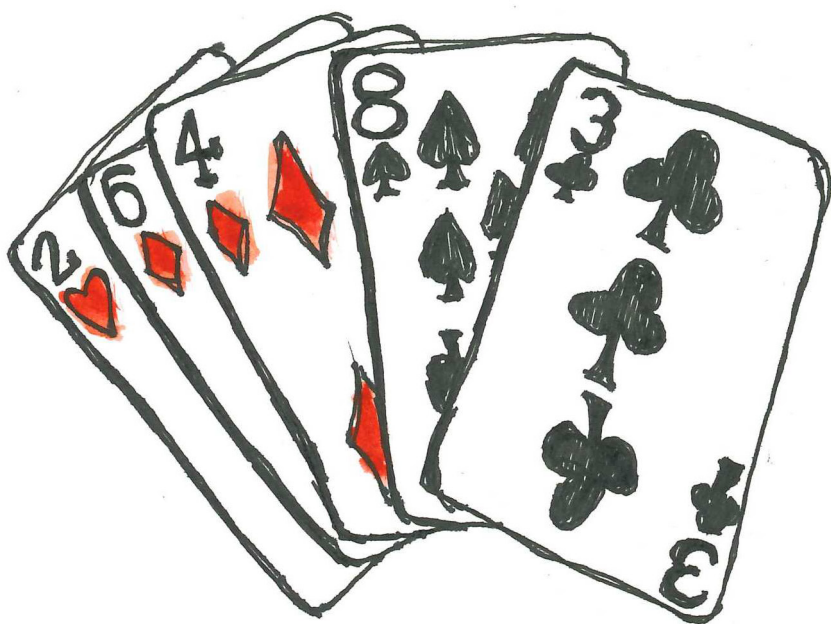
Running my fingers down its bark,
Traces of straw snakes
And burnt fields.



NOTES

THIS BOOKLET BELONGS TO:

TRINT#



J. BARTON