

## LITTLE BARREL POEMS

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Aaron Anstett

1

Veins raised on his stretched neck,  
a horse leans down and knocks his snout  
against a rain barrel's boards  
until water runs out. By dusk  
his owners come in from the fields  
and beat him, then set about patching  
the hole with shingle scraps, edges ragged  
as coastlines on a map. The horse's lips  
are pulled back, his teeth clamped  
steady on the handle of the oil lamp.

2

Board by board, I undo a barrel,  
stove through each stave until  
it's splinters, kindling,  
scrapwood and chips  
I unloose with the hammer.  
The shape the barrel held  
is still there, but barely.  
It's an idea. It's air.  
Here, on the ground, are three tin rings  
with nails pointing in.