



Abide (Crab Orchard Series in Poetry)

Jake Adam York

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Winner, 2015 Colorado Book Award

Finalist, 2015 National Book Critics Circle Award

In the years leading up to his recent passing, Alabama poet Jake Adam York set out on a journey to elegize the 126 martyrs of the civil rights movement, murdered in the years between 1954 and 1968. *Abide* is the stunning follow-up to York's earlier volumes, a memorial in verse for those fallen. From Birmingham to Okemah, Memphis to Houston, York's poems both mourn and inspire in their quest for justice, ownership, and understanding.

Within are anthems to John Earl Reese, a sixteen-year-old shot by Klansmen through the window of a café in Mayflower, Texas, where he was dancing in 1955; to victims lynched on the Oklahoma prairies; to the four children who perished in the Birmingham church bombing of 1963; and to families who saw the white hoods of the Klan illuminated by burning crosses. Juxtaposed with these horrors are more loving images of the South: the aroma of greens simmering on the stove, "tornado-strong" houses built by loved ones long gone, and the power of rivers "dark as roux."

Throughout these lush narratives, York resurrects the ghosts of Orpheus, Sun Ra, Howlin' Wolf, Thelonious Monk, Woody Guthrie, and more, summoning blues, jazz, hip-hop, and folk musicians for performances of their "liberation music" that give special meaning to the tales of the dead.

In the same moment that *Abide* memorializes the fallen, it also raises the ethical questions faced by York during this, his life's work: What does it mean to elegize? What does it mean to elegize martyrs? What does it mean to disturb the symmetries of the South's racial politics or its racial poetics?

A bittersweet elegy for the poet himself, *Abide* is as subtle and inviting as the whisper of a record sleeve, the gasp of the record needle, beckoning us to heed our history.

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