

Over

He found the beat in everything. Coca-Cola glasses, shifting light and doing dances, created the most electrifying tunes while traveling on conveyors. He'd hurry home to perform Honey Do's and hit the hammer on the nails and let His toes keep time: "Tap. Tap. Tap." Occasionally, He would throw in a line from an old Army song or a Negro spiritual. He had been a soldier all His life and a slave to none, but He knew all too well of where We had come from. Tin cans yelled "GET!", "SCRAM!" at squirrels that thought His pear trees were theirs. The hollowed clang took Him back to the old juke joint days when He would meet the Masons, and brothers and sisters would scat their worries away. The can's kin, Roof Tin, obeyed His command and became His instrument with every bend. If Tin was too big, He would cut him down to size and judge His accuracy by his tone.

Knowing it was fairly useless for us to try to call, as He was likely outdoors making music of it all, Mom and I would just walk up the hill to visit Him. To let us in, He would pull the chain through the diamonds in the gate while leaning to the balls of His feet as if He could just leap into the sky, like His Bride so long ago, no longer bound by what was below.

"Swing low sweet chariot, coming forth to carry me home."

Those chains made him think of the refrain from his youth. He smiled and somehow must have remembered how he was back then, though he remembered very little now. He found a beat with foreign hands and feet for more weeks than we care to count. His spoon would clank and rock to silence when those strange carriers couldn't quite make it to His mouth. Faces became pages. Eyes became two whole notes that He would study so deeply eight counts easily became sixteen. There were very few lyrics anymore, but He mastered rest so beautifully we questioned what we ever needed words for. Silence filled the room like light but found its way into the crevices and nooks that light knew not of. Just the right time for the majestic melody from above to give Him His final marching orders:

"Tap. Tap. Tap. Swing low sweet chariot, coming forth to carry me home."

I still imagine how He must have felt hearing His Wife's sweet voice after decades of living without Her.

Did His Daughter run to Him the way She had when stepping off the bus from Grambling after a grueling semester?

My Great-Grandfather found rhythm in the Blues until Rhythm decided to find Him.

Oh, how One's most pivotal measures can come when they are nearly out of time or out of mind. The beat of His heart still resonates within mine. Now, when Life is too much in disharmony, I channel His silenced song and hear from nooks and crevices that I will be just fine.