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## Because It's Raining on Robert Johnson's Birthday

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*Because it's Raining on  
Robert Johnson's Birthday*

Which is the way it should be.  
No round-faced sun high over the city  
shining like the bossman, bright and white,  
when the line restarts  
for the morning shift.

The rain turning into sleet, into steel,  
guitar picks coming down and the sound  
of freight trains sliding through the railyard,  
strumming the fretwork  
of ties and track.

Last night I dreamed  
he was tramping down the shell roads  
of Louisiana,  
his clothes rumpled and torn.  
Following him,  
looking over his shoulder was his shadow  
wearing a tuxedo, black as scorn.  
I could hear bloodhounds hunting coon  
on the ridge at dusk, digging out  
the moon from its lair of night.

The door of my room chained, rattling  
when the loaded coalcars pass  
carrying the burden of darkness  
into morning light.  
The lamp left on, the shade  
dusty as mothwings.  
On the nighttable  
an insidious still life—  
a fedora, no shotglass or syringe, just my pen  
and a few crumpled bills and change.

This morning it rains for Robert Johnson.  
He shakes my shoulder  
saying wake up whiteboy.  
This day ain't goin' away.  
Nobody askin' ya to believe in the blues  
just because.