

Knock Knock ~Daniel Beaty

As a boy I shared a game with my father. Played it every morning 'til I was 3. He would knock knock on my door, and I'd pretend to be asleep 'til he got right next to the bed, Then I would get up and jump into his arms. "Good morning, Papa." And my papa he would tell me that he loved me. We shared a game. Knock knock.

Until that day when the knock never came and my momma takes me on a ride past corn fields on this never ending highway 'til we reach a place of high rusty gates. A confused little boy, I entered the building carried in my mama's arms. Knock knock. We reach a room of windows and brown faces behind one of the windows sits my father. I jump out of my mama's arms and run joyously towards my papa Only to be confronted by this window. I knock knock trying to break through the glass, trying to get to my father. I knock knock as my mama pulls me away before my papa even says a word.

And for years he never said a word. And so twenty-five years later, I write these words for the little boy in me who still awaits his papa's knock. Papa, come home 'cause I miss you. I miss you waking me up in the morning and telling me you love me. Papa, come home, 'cause there's things I don't know, and I thought maybe you could teach me. how to shave; how to dribble a ball; how to talk to a lady; how to walk like a man. Papa, come home because I decided a while back I wanted to be just like you. But I'm forgetting who you are. And twenty-five years later a little boy cries, and so I write these words and try to heal and try to father myself and I dream up a father who says the words my father did not.

Dear Son,

I'm sorry I never came home. For every lesson I failed to teach, hear these words: Shave in one direction in strong deliberate strokes to avoid irritation Dribble the page with the brilliance of your ballpoint pen. Walk like a god and your goddess will come to you. No longer will I be there to knock on your door, So you must learn to knock for yourself.

Knock knock down doors of racism and poverty that I could not. Knock knock down doors of opportunity for the lost brilliance of the black men who crowd these cells. Knock knock with diligence for the sake of your children.

Knock knock for me for as long as you are free, these prison gates cannot contain my spirit. The best of me still lives in you. Knock knock with the knowledge that you are my son, but you are not my choices.

Yes, we are our fathers' sons and daughters, but we are not their choices. For despite their absences we are still here. Still alive, still breathing with the power to change this world, one little boy and girl at a time.

Knock knock
Who's there?
We are.

Point B ~Sarah Kay (Don't miss her speech on TED.com)

If I should have a daughter, instead of Mom, she's gonna call me Point B, because that way she knows that no matter what happens, at least she can always find her way to me. And I'm going to paint solar systems on the backs of her hands, so she has to learn the entire universe before she can say, "Oh, I know that like the back of my hand."

And she's going to learn that this life will hit you hard in the face, wait for you to get back up just so it can kick you in the stomach. But getting the wind knocked out of you is the only way to remind your lungs how much they like the taste of air. There is hurt here that cannot be fixed by Band-Aids or poetry. So the first time she realizes that Wonder Woman isn't coming, I'll make sure she knows she doesn't have to wear the cape all by herself. Because no matter how wide you stretch your fingers, your hands will always be too small to catch all the pain you want to heal. Believe me, I've tried.

"And, baby," I'll tell her, don't keep your nose up in the air like that. I know that trick; I've done it a million times. You're just smelling for smoke so you can follow the trail back to a burning house, so you can find the boy who lost everything in the fire to see if you can save him. Or else find the boy who lit the fire in the first place, to see if you can change him." But I know she will anyway, so instead I'll always keep an extra supply of chocolate and rain boots nearby, because there is no heartbreak that chocolate can't fix. Okay, there's a few heartbreaks that chocolate can't fix. But that's what the rain boots are for. Because rain will wash away everything, if you let it. I want her to look at the world through the underside of a glass-bottom boat, to look through a microscope at the galaxies that exist on the pinpoint of a human mind, because that's the way my mom taught me. That there'll be days like this. 🎵 There'll be days like this, my momma said. 🎵 When you open your hands to catch and wind up with only blisters and bruises; when you step out of the phone booth and try to fly and the very people you want to save are the ones standing on your cape; when your boots will fill with rain, and you'll be up to your knees in disappointment.

And those are the very days you have all the more reason to say thank you. Because there's nothing more beautiful than the way the ocean refuses to stop kissing the shoreline, no matter how many times it's swept away. You will put the wind in winsome, lose some. You will put the star in starting over, and over. And no matter how many land mines erupt in a minute, be sure your mind lands on the beauty of this funny place called life. And yes, on a scale from one to over-trusting, I am pretty damn naive. But I want her to know that this world is made out of sugar. It can crumble so easily, but don't be afraid to stick your tongue out and taste it.

"Baby," I'll tell her, "remember, your momma is a worrier, and your poppa is a warrior, and you are the girl with small hands and big eyes who never stops asking for more." Remember that good things come in threes and so do bad things. And always apologize when you've done something wrong. But don't you ever apologize for the way your eyes refuse to stop shining.

Your voice is small, but don't ever stop singing. And when they finally hand you heartache, when they slip war and hatred under your door and offer you handouts on street-corners of cynicism and defeat, you tell them that they really ought to meet your mother.