



Video Story Transcript

Roots to Rap

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Link to YouTube Video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sqgYHuPSgbk>

Note : The following is a transcription of a spoken story performance and may not reflect textbook perfect English. It will guide you as you listen (or read) along.

You know, the blues really forms the basis of all of the music that we listen to now. There are a lot of great blues performers that people may not know their names but you know their music. And, in fact, their music becomes the source of our music. For example, one of the most important blues men of all time, one of my favorite blues, was a guy by the name of Eddie James House, Jr. They called him Son House. And Son was amazing. Son was like your uncle, who knows everything. He would look at you and say things like, "There ain't but one kind of blues. The *real* blues. The B-L-U-E-S blues. That's the kind of blues that exists between male and female. Everything else is mucky junk. Now when you get that letter bordered in black, man, that's bad news. They calls that the death letter. Now you do too much of the death letter blues, you're liable to jump in the river and drown y'self." (*Silly Son House giggle*) Then he'd take that old National steel guitar and play a couple licks on it like. (*Guitar playing some blues*)

(Singing)

*I got a letter this mornin, how you reckon it read?
It said, "Hurry, hurry, 'cuz the gal you love is dead"
I got a letter this mornin, oh, Lord, how you reckon it read?
It said, "Hurry, hurry, 'cuz the gal you love is dead."*

You know I packed up my little suitcase, took off down the road

*When I got there, you know, she was layin' on a coolin' board
I packed up my suitcase, I took off down the road
You know, when I got there, yeah, she was layin' out on a coolin' board*

Now this song could go on for a really long time depending on how Son feels and how he wants to stretch out those verses. What I found out when I was in a school one time, talking about the blues, that you can do something else with this song. So, I always wait 'til almost the end of the assembly and then I wrap up the song like this after a couple of verses. *(Guitar playing some blues)* I'd tell the kids, "You know I would love to do this whole song for you but I don't have time. You know, it's got so many verses but if I modernize it. If instead of doing each verse twice, I'd do each verse once. If I sped up the song and faded the music out, it might become a little bit more familiar to modern audiences. So then we do "The Death Letter Blues 2010 Remake." *(Guitar playing some modern blues)*

(Singing with ever increasing speed until becoming rap)

*I got a letter this mornin, how do you reckon it said?
It said, "Hurry, hurry, 'cuz the gal you love is dead"
You know, I packed up my suitcase, I took off down the road
When I got there she was layin' out on a coolin' board*

*I ease up closer to look down in her face,
I say, "Hey, you know, I love you but I just can't take your place"
You know, it seem like stars were standing in front of me on the ground
I didn't know how much I love you 'til they put my baby in the ground*

*For my arms and legs, I walked away
I say, "Hey, I love you, have to see you Judgment Day"
You know, I woke up this mornin', it was about the break of day
And I was huggin' on a pillow where my baby used to lay
I went to church, bowed down, I tried to pray
But the blues come along and they blow my spirit away*

*Woke up this mornin', it was about the break of day
I was huggin' on a pillow where my baby used to lay
I said, "Hush" I thought I heard her call my name
She ain't call so loud, but she called so plain
Yeah, boy.*