

## THE MANDOLIN AND THE PIG:

I was 'bout eight. I went down a dusty road one day. Man had a house settin' on the side to the road. Well, he sittin' on his porch playin' this mandolin. I went by and ask him what it was.

"This is a mandolin, son."

"I like that. Let me see it."

He said, "All right."

I give it a lick or two. I give it back to him, say, "I sure like it".

"Let me sell it to you".

"What you take for it?"

"Five Dollar".

Now five dollar, I don't have no five dollar. My daddy didn't either.

I couldn't dream of five dollar.

I said, "I ain't got that, Mr. Augie." Man's name was Augie Rawls. My parents knowed him, but I didn't want to tell my parents he sold it to me.

Said, "I got a pig I'll trade for it."

"You got a pig?"

"Yeah"

"Where the pig?"

I said, "At home."

"Well, all right. Go get the pig. I'll let you have the mandolin."

My mother give me a little pig, you know. She said, "James, raise you that pig and you'll have some meat this fall to eat."

I said. "Yes'm."

I went on home. Went to the barn. My daddy raised plenty corn. I shell some corn and put it down there. I called the little pig out and he went to eatin' corn. I got me a croaker sack and caught the little pig and put 'im in there.

Went 'round the thicket and carried that pig to the man's house. He took the pig. He like this pig, a little ole black china, a fine-looking hog. He knowed what the value of the pig would be when it growed up.

But I didn't. I didn't care.

I went on home with the mandolin. *Blam, blam, blam.* Couldn't play nothin'. Just bammin' on it. It sound good to me, you know. It was somethin' new to me. A guitar wadn't new, but a mandolin was new to me.

*Blam, blam, blam.* I just liked the sound of it. Had eight strings on it, and I enjoyed it. I didn't know one sound from the other, but I know I liked it. It had stripes down the back. Was a gourd mandolin, round in the back. What they call a 'tater-bug mandolin'.

It's a worrisome thing when somebody playin' and can't play nothin' on it. It run you crazy. *Blam, blam, blam.* Well, I wadn't playin' nothin'. Didn't know nothin' to play.

My daddy, he sit and listen to me awhile. The old man got tired. He short-winded.

"Here, son, put that thing down. Gotta go to work tomorrow."

"All right, sir."

I put it down. He get up and go to work. I get up and, as soon as he leave, I get it and go to workin' on it!

Mother'll go along with you for a long time. Finally, one mornin' she come down the stairs, down by the fireplace.

"James?"

I say, "M'am."

"Where that pig of yours?"

"I don't know Mama. I reckon he out there."

She said, I ain't seed that pig in a day or two."

"I ain't either Mama". I just kept bammin' on the mandolin, you know.

She said, "You ain't seen 'im in a day or two?"

"No."

"Well go see you can find that pig."

"Yes'm."

I put the mandolin down. I don't want to go, but I had to go out there. I went out to the barn. Stood there about ten minutes. I didn't stay long enough to fool her. But I was young. I didn't have no sense. I wanted to get back on that mandolin. I'm going back and get that mandolin. Come on back.

"James you see that pig anywhere."

"No Mama, I ain't seed that pig nowhere."

"Where'd you go?"

"Man, I went all around the thicket and everywhere."

"You're a liar. You ain't been gone that long."

Uh oh! I kept bammin on that mandolin. I wadn't studying her.

She says, "What is that thing?"

I said, "A mandolin."

"Mandolin?"

"Yes'm."

"Where you get it from? Did you steal it?"

You better not steal something, them old folks'll kill you. Better not steal in them days. Better not steal nothin'.

I said, "No Mama I didn't steal it."

"Well, where you get it from then?"

"Oh Mama, I got it from a fella."

"What fella?"

"Oh Mama, I got it from a man. I don't know his name."

Well, I didn't want to tell her Mr. Augie Rawls had it, 'cause he were a friend to my peoples, you know. I know they get at him and make me carry the mandolin back and get the pig. I wouldn't tell her.

She said, "You don't know the man's name. And he let you have that?"

I said, "Yes'm."

She didn't day nothin'. She was sewin'. Put her needle and thread down.

A big willow tree was in the front yard. I know where she was goin'.

She went out the door. She went there, got every switch on that tree, that tree willow. She come in there.

"Uh huh, you gonna tell me where you got it from? I'm gonna whup you."

She said, "Pull off them clothes. I ain't gonna wear them clothes out.

I bought 'em. I'm gonna whup the meat."

I had to tell her then. I said, "Mama I traded the pig for this mandolin."

"I ought to kill you," she said. "I'm not gonna whup you, boy. But you know what? This fall when we butcher meat and eat it, you eat that thing, 'cause you ain't gonna get no meat."

I didn't care I had the mandolin!

--James "Yank" Rachell