

The Drummer Boy of Shiloh Joby by Vic Reinhardt  
Let the Angel Drum featuring Joby by Ella Wever

The peach colored sun dipped behind the line of trees west of where Joby stood now. Two months ago he would not have known which direction was west. Or north, or south, or east.

Two months ago he would have been at home with momma and papa. He would have been there when his sister would arrive.

But Joby was not at home, he would not be there when his sister would arrive. He stood solemn on a plain of horror. Bodies littered the ground: some were pale, dead for many days without a burial, some were still tan and dark. Some were dark only with blood. Joby would see birds flying in swooping angles, elegant, when he was at home. The only birds he saw now were circling the perimeter of the battle ground. Some were already beginning to do those once elegant and beautiful swoops. They were nothing less than terrifying now.

Sounds and memories washed over every surface in Joby's mind, soldiers footsteps in a steady sure rhythm; he heard his own drum beat accordingly to the soldiers feet.

Joby had not heard the soldiers feet in hours, maybe days. It had been even longer since Joby had heard his drum beat. Its wonderful rhythm had been overwhelmed by screams and yells and shooting and swords and then thumps.

The thumps were the worst, when a soldier fell to the ground. When a soldier did not get back up.

The thumps were all he could hear now. They sounded faintly like the beating of his drum.

"You need not worry Joby, your comrades survive." A woman's voice, airy like a flute. He looked around, spun in a circle twice trying to find the source of such a melodious voice. When he came to his third circle, she was in front of him.

The woman must have been an angel, Joby thought, for how else could she be so pristine on such a horrid landscape. "Joby you mustn't wallow, soldiers need your drum, they need to know they can get up."

Joby looked around the field again, as he had been doing for hours now, but this time he saw it. Men propped up on trees hissing in pain as they examined their injuries, boys not any older than himself, sprawled on the muddy grass cut up and bruised, but their chests still rose. "You must beat your drum Joby, you must tell them to fight on, you must tell them they get to go back to their families." Now Joby looked at the woman, he hadn't realized how her feet did not touch the ground, rather they hovered just above, brushing against pieces of grass.

"Who are you?" Joby asked. The woman simply smiled and gestured her hand towards the field below, where all the soldiers rested.

"Beat your drum, Joby." and then as soon as Joby blinked his eyes, she had vanished. He did not bother looking around, he knew he would not see her again.

The sun was nearly gone now, neatly settled behind Joby, who still stood atop the hill, who watched the soldiers struggle.

Joby lifted his hands, drumsticks still clutched in his hand even after hours. Joby begins to beat his drum, a slow ever quickening beat. For the soldiers who fell.

And for the soldiers who did not.