

My Daddy Worked In the Junkyard

I wish you could have known my daddy!
You would have loved his quiet way, his inner strength, his slow smile.
My daddy worked in the junkyard,
Not some metaphorical place, symbolic of some other job,
No, it was a real junkyard.
My daddy got his hands dirty everyday as he dug through mountains of regurgitated junk and
garbage,
My daddy transformed that “wretched refuse of everybody’s teeming shores” into food, shelter,
and clothing for our beleaguered family.
My daddy worked in the junkyard---the bowels of the city where the flotsam and jetsam of
sophisticated people came to die,
But my daddy performed triage on that amalgamated debris,
Digging into it with his hands
Holding his breath lest he inhale sometimes toxic, lung-killing particulates,
Searching for treasures.
He found them.
He brought them home to me!
Books, sometimes with missing covers or pages---my daddy wanted me to learn!
An old rusty bicycle with unfashionable balloon tires in the days of sleek and shiny ten-speed
racers with razor-thin wheels---my daddy wanted me to go place!
A pair of old roller skates with worn and frayed leather uppers and lopsided wooden wheels---
my daddy wanted me to soar!
It was junk---precious, transcended junk,
Mightily wrested from messy piles and gingerly cleaned by my daddy’s strong, tired, naked
hands,
Salvaged so that I would be lifted high---carried to another world.
I wish you could have known my daddy!
I ache to remember how much he loved me---and I him.
I wish I could have worked in the junkyard so I could have given you so many treasures that
would have lifted you high and taken you to another world.
I wish you could have known my daddy!
He worked in the junkyard.

Willie J. Johnson