

Poem to the Beams in My Uncle's House, Empty These Days

Before he died, did you memorize
those rusty songs my uncle played
through brittle strings digging deep
grooves in fingers praying
they would hold out for one more
chorus of "Jambalaya," so we could say good
bye to Joe one last righteous time
on that guitar he claimed to have
jammed with Hank Williams on,
glimpsing blues in that white
boy shucking and grinning, forgiving
him the cowboy hat long
enough to absorb that magic, steal
it back for Robert Johnson and anyone
else whose fingers bled with that
thick rich indigo liquid and infuse
it with that old Indian
smoke, sliding red into
those blues, blooming rich
purple clouds through
the greasy sound hole where decades
of beer sweat sweetened those darker tones?

We still need to sing the blues
but in the intervening years
we have forgotten the chords
that would take us home, so
if you did commit them
to memory, even a couple,
could you pass them on?

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