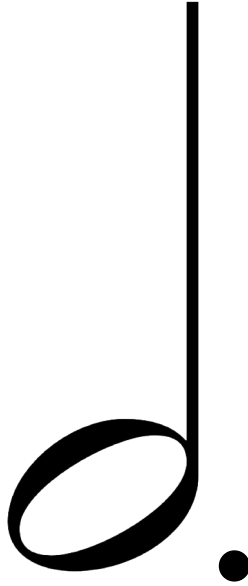


drummond



Drummond

A Novel By Patrick R. F. Blakley

Drummond

Written by Patrick R. F. Blakley

Printed by Lulu Press Inc.
Raleigh, North Carolina, United States

First Printing April 2021
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Copyright © 2021 by Patrick R. F. Blakley
All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced,
scanned, or distributed in any printed or electronic form
without permission. Please do not participate in or encourage
piracy of copyrighted books in violation of the author's rights.
Purchase only authorized editions.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA
has been applied for.

Hardcover ISBN 978-1-716-48649-4
Paperback ISBN 978-1-6780-6776-2
eBook ISBN 978-1-6780-6739-7

**Make yourself someone you can trust,
then start listening to yourself.**

- *Stephen L. Melillo*

Drummond

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Lessons Are A Lot Like Church	15
Chapter 2: Joining The Marching Band	37
Chapter 3: Woop Woop Wap Wap	65
Chapter 4: Beep Beep Bip Bip	81
Chapter 5: Honk Honk Honk Honk	99
Chapter 6: Boop Boop Bop Bop	115
Chapter 7: Distress And Distractions	135
Chapter 8: Understanding The Bass Drum	151
Chapter 9: The Fourteen Disciples	165
Chapter 10: Learning The New Drill	187
Chapter 11: A Full Run Through	215
Chapter 12: The Longest Day	231

Chapter 1

Lessons Are A Lot Like Church

(Half-Step #1: D - Do - P1)

“Hi Dru,” the man said from my front door.

I shuddered just a little bit. Dru, a single syllable, bland and unsophisticated. Shouldn't a name be more interesting than a singular blurted sound? I mean, it represents an entire human life, complex and interesting, summed up by one syllable? Blah. I can't hold it against him, I thought to myself, my name is Drummond and he just assumes I go by Dru. I read that line in my head like a script every time this happens. Sometimes I continue, he's just being friendly, let's see if he's the type of person to ask what I prefer to be called. Some people are

careful not to insult me by shortening the name my parents gave me. Not that I'd be insulted, but I guess some people actually take offense to something like that. Not me though! I blur the line on sarcasm.

Some people just call me Drummond right away. Usually this is a sort of question which silently invites me to let them shorten it, if I so choose. Others will use my full name, but ask if I go by Dru or not. I always respond the same way, that they can call me both, but I prefer Drummond. Maybe I'm too nice. I don't love being called Dru, but I'm not going to correct someone because I don't want them to feel like they did something wrong. Maybe I tend to overthink this. Maybe it's time to give up and let the wheel-of-randomness decide my name for everyone who meets me and spins it!

The smallest fraction of people will issue me a multiple choice surprise quiz. I'm not a fan of tests, and I get a little bit uneasy.

"Hi Drummond," they'd begin, "do you go by A: Drummond, B: Dru, C: Drum, or D: None of the above?"

Okay, okay, they don't literally list them like that using lettered answers, but they do suggest abbreviations for my name. This single-question test is worth one-hundred percent of my grade. I better get this right since it'll go onto my permanent record with this testing institution. How do I answer though? Am I allowed to

choose more than one answer? How do I make sure they know I'm not offended by any of these names, but that I do have a preferred designation. Should I give them strict percentages for every response on how often they're allowed to use each name? Or will they cling to the most dominant answer I give and brandish that title as the pilot insignia under the cockpit of a fighter jet.

What nobody ever knows, and couldn't ever guess, is that my friends call me Drummy. I'm not sure who coined the nickname, maybe family, maybe friend, but if I had to guess I'd say that in the past someone gave me the ol' pop-quiz and I answered C for Drum and it turned into a nickname.

C is the most common answer on most multiple choice tests. Since teachers don't want to give up the correct answer right away for answer A or B. And to wait until D is tantamount to circling the correct answer themselves. C! C is definitely the correct answer precisely sixty-five percent of the time, which promises you a passing grade if you just pick C all the way down the page. You'll end up bored just sitting in class after handing in your test mere moments after receiving it, but boredom is a cheap price to pay for just getting by with the bare minimum. However, a coy teacher would know this, and in turn might shift their correct answers to B, the next logical hiding place. Doing this would defeat the classic C strategy completely and until it's brought before the Supreme Court of the United States of

America students using the C strategy will plummet the overall grades of every school in the county, perhaps even the entire world!... Anyway, I probably got the wrong answer and calling me Drum evolved into rebranding the nickname to Drummy.

Nobody gets to pick their own nickname, but at least Drummy made sense. I'll always know someone's talking to me when they call me that, it sounds just like my full name.

Funnier still, I think the name drew me toward drums. When asked what instrument I wanted to play I gravitated toward drums, probably without even realizing it! I think my dad played trumpet in school, but music wasn't really a huge part of our everyday lives. Other than racks of CDs in the family room and a tall wooden cabinet of sound gear, my starter drum pad just collected dust at home. Music and band was just another class in school.

Half a second passed in slow motion as I oversaturated it with my tired inner monologue...

"Hello," I simply responded to the man at my front door.

The man introduced himself as just Dwayne. Until now I'd never met a Dwane before, I mean, I knew it was a name, but I don't think I've ever said it out loud until now. My teachers taught me how to remember someone's name easily after meeting them, just repeat it back to them and it'll stick.

“Hi Dwayne,” I said while shaking his hand, “I’m Drummond, but my friends call me Drummy.”

Now, sticking Dwayne’s name in my head was never going to be a problem. A little because this was the first Dwayne I’ve ever entered into my internal name database, becoming the default Dwayne in my system. However, there are other, more prominent reasons why he’ll come to mind whenever I hear that name. Imagine a large overstuffed teddy bear with a big perfectly round body and short appendages. But not one you can carry around, imagine it even bigger, unliftably big. Dark brown fur, white shoes with tall white socks, smiling pleasantly. Now just add a button down jean dress shirt with short sleeves! His big right paw gently enveloped my hand during his introduction. Dwayne was a nice man, a gentle giant, but I was shy and didn’t make eye contact. My parents were now both behind me, strategically waiting for me to be the one to answer the door first. They made the appropriate eye contact for me.

Now, Dwayne was a regular door-to-door salesman, the religious type. Pretty sure he cold called my parents and then showed up here with a pamphlet for us and a binder full of notes for himself. He told us about a hole in his congregation that he’s been hoping to fill, and that I would be the perfect candidate for the task.

“Come, let’s sit down at the table and discuss our future,” Dwayne smoothly invited himself in.

I don't remember the exact words he used, I'm already not paying attention.

My mother speed walked down the hall, passing family member after family member in search of some cleaning spray and paper towels. My father walked a little slower, he knew the drill, delay enough and the kitchen would be clean in seconds. The floor creaks a bit as we all walk slowly across it. The house isn't that old, it's actually pretty nice, but with three and a half men walking across it at once I don't blame it for complaining a little.

"Come on back," my mother exclaimed as the rest of us continued slowly coming on back, "sit right here Dwayne."

She ushered him into a chair she pulled aside just for him. He smiled a thank you. Flick, my mom flips the light switches and the lights all come on as my butt hits the bench. It's almost too bright now with light spewing from every room I can see. Mom and Dad both suddenly fill the vacant seats at the heads of the table so I didn't have to go it alone on this one. I just watch the clock.

The kitchen table, a completely foreign environment for Dwayne, but a well known meeting ground for me and my family, the room was habitable but sometimes hostile. The table stood fast between the kitchen and the family room. Nestled between arguments and television shows, homework and birthday parties,

breakfast and dinner. This was no place to discuss religion. But, then again, Dwayne's wasn't just any religion.

Dwayne laid upon the table forty commandments, or whatever he called them, I wasn't totally engaged with the man, rather the clock on the wall behind him. About six, but ticking slow and tocking even slower.

"Drummond," his big big-finger pointed to the page, "how many of these do you know already?"

I began to focus, I oriented myself with the page, taking just a moment and stopping at the first thing I recognized.

"Oh, I know Paradiddles," the words confidently popped out of my mouth somehow.

"Any others?" Dwayne encouraged me.

I take more time and actually look at a few before chiming in again.

"Um, yeah actually I think I know a lot of these already," I assured everyone at a mezzo-forte volume.

This isn't what I thought, this visit, this whole meeting. Dwayne didn't cold call us at all! My parents had something to do with this entirely. Dwayne slid the first two pages toward me and started going through his bag on the floor next to his chair. I heard a familiar wooden sound as he haphazardly searched for a pencil at the bottom of his small black backpack. The next sheet he pulled out for me had some text with blank lines

scattered throughout. Dwayne looked at me and gave me his pitch, an easy fastball right down the middle.

“I want to sign you up for percussion lessons Drummond. I teach music at the high school and we’re looking for a few more members. Your band teacher, Mr. Ti, gave me your name specifically and I think you’d be a great fit,” he continued for a moment. “Do you think you’d be interested in joining the marching band?... Not many eighth-grade students get the opportunity to play in the high school band. We would take several baby steps to get you up to speed, ‘half-steps’ we call them in music. Twelve half-steps and I’m certain you’ll be ready. A chromatic scale in D, for Drummond!”

He smirks, that must have been clever if you already understood what a half-step was. I don’t, not yet anyway. We’ll have to add that to the list of things he’ll need to show me if we do this.

“Do you have any questions about any of this?” Dwayne pauses and turns all eyes toward me.

“Yea, what’s percussion?” I say, slightly confused.

I was a drummer in school, why would I play percussion? I just showed him I recognized these forty drum rudiments!

“Percussion is drums,” my father emphasized. “You’re a percussionist already Drummy.”

As right as he may be, I don't feel like a percussionist, I barely feel like a drummer. Right now I'm more of a boy that just owns two cheap drumsticks!

At six-thirty the several documents donned flashy new signatures of my parents and there was a sloppy pile of sheet music and notes in front of me. Dwayne was heading to the front door so I politely got up and saw him off.

"See you at our first lesson on Sunday Drummond," Dwayne concluded and waved before pushing the resistant storm door shut against the pneumatic door's wishes.

The storm door, it sounds so ominous, but I can't think of a better name off the top of my head. I guess that's why I'm not in charge of naming doors, or other storm related gear. I don't often get calls from storm-team members, or storm-chasers, looking for names to put on their equipment labels. I digress.

I have to be honest here, as soon as they all started talking about band boosters and fundraising I stopped paying attention, my mind was already on the music. Bass drum is the specific instrument displayed under the show title *Stormworks*. My mind bounces back to the stormfront. I come to the realization that if Dwayne didn't just say the word *lessons* as he left I might not even know I just got signed up for private

instruction. Perhaps I just watched the clock a bit too much.

My mind settles in. A new religion, one hour every Sunday morning. I've just been confirmed. I'm now a parishioner of percussion, but not yet a percussionist.

"Percussion huh?" I say to myself out loud. "I'll have to remember that one, it's a good word." I can't tell if I'm thinking or talking out loud as I look around cautiously to see if anyone heard me.

Dwayne already taught me something. Maybe this will even be fun. But first, some TV! I turn it on, that super high pitch sound adults can't hear fills the family room and kitchen.

"Is your homework done?" My mom tactically opened fire upon seeing the screen illuminate. "No TV until you've finished all your school work."

"I didn't have any tonight Mom," I fibbed with just a little white lie.

Whatever got me in front of the TV the fastest, give me that dopamine hit! Besides, I convince myself, the homework isn't even due until Monday, I've got all weekend to do it! A dangerous game, and now one I must complete with stealth. Now I'm definitely caught in a lie if my mom sees me doing my homework!

Seven strikes of Joe Sirois's snare drum blurted out into my bedroom. I lifted my arm up and felt around

for the snooze button, the only word I know in braille. The Mighty Mighty Bosstones wake me up every morning. Sometimes I slept through it all the way up to at least Roil Oil, but today I was wide awake on count number one. Have you ever woken up and couldn't figure out what day it was? I started getting ready for school when my mom yelled up the stairs.

“Don't forget your drumsticks today, and the music he gave you!” Her reminder shedding light on everything.

Oh no, it was Sunday! The nerves emerge from behind my inner curtain. Here I'm standing with my school bookbag on my back as I heed my mother's proclamation. I take off my bookbag and grab my stick bag, almost forgetting my music on the music-stand. The nerves swell as the stairwell swallows me whole, each step a visual staccato as I focus in on every one. Mom hands me breakfast to go as we efficiently enter the van. It's a little chilly out today in late March, but the van is warm since my mom just returned from church. She discovered recently that it's much easier to just go alone than to corral the whole reluctant family into the van in the morning. God is everywhere though right? My brain quotes my dad, who's still asleep upstairs.

We reverse out of the driveway and we've already hit the first red light. My mom seems a little impatient, but I don't mind the delay. Each red light is a relief as the closer we get to the school the more

inflamed my nerves become. Red light number two, yes! I take a deep breath. I begin to count the number of remaining lights off the top of my head, could we be so lucky as to hit all nine others? Crap, the Thruway and park lights were both green. Mom passes a slow car in the right lane, and again another green light. I look in the passenger mirror, cars are stopping behind us, that light turned red just after we got through it. Sunday drivers are my glorious friends this morning and the almighty traffic signal at Taft Road is always red going this direction! A moment of salvation. Mom is slow on the gas this time as cars jump off the line alongside us. I look down, my quick and easy breakfast is untouched. We're at the longest stretch of road between lights, I try to distract myself by eating. A bagel with butter and cinnamon spread on top, a specialty of my mom's, hits the spot, but not a remedy for butterflies. I think these thoughts to myself with my mouth full, and I even hear my inner dialogue talking with food in its mouth. Half a bagel down and we're turning left, then right through two more green lights. That last intersection didn't stand a chance with right-on-red coming in handy for my mom. The last one is coming up soon. I set the rest of my holey cinnamon refreshment onto a napkin as the van's turn signal blinks and clicks like a metronome in the turn lane at the red light. I'm pushed back into my seat as we accelerate and I brush the crumbs off my lap right onto the floor when my mom isn't looking, focused

on the left turn. Mom multitasks as she pulls out a twenty dollar bill from her pocket while she simultaneously parks the van roughly between the lines.

“Have fun,” Mom smiles.

“Yep,” I muster the most profound response in the history of responses as I get out of the van.

Dwayne drives a tan truck. I remember from seeing it out of place in my driveway. It isn't a pickup truck, but it isn't a sport utility vehicle either. Whatever it is, it's recognizable. Some dings, some scratches, but looks like it gets the job done. I have to walk past it to the fine arts door at the side of the high school. My body is vibrating from nerves so much that my tooth fillings complain. The door is unlocked. I hear my mom drive away as my eighth grade foot steps slowly inside the intimidatingly foreign high school hallway. Tall lockers on both sides like decayed green teeth ready to devour me. I march forward, out of time.

The band room is right up this hallway on the left. I know this because I hear the sound spilling out of a snare drum being tuned through a wedged open solid wood door. I peek inside, Dwayne's back is to me at the far side of the room. To my right is a massive metal door fit for a bank vault with dim lights and stage weights attached to pulleys just on the other side. What am I getting myself into? My brain asks my body whose legs are tiptoeing forward. Cages and cages of instruments and folders line the room, like a pet store for horns, or a

terribly inhumane zoo. Colorfully dusty trophies and huge plaques adorn the perimeter of the entire massive room. They seem to be tipping themselves over fighting for a better view of some small kid walking into their domain. This lesson is a sold out concert full of esteemed old golden dignitaries from across the state, and country... and... does that sign say Bordeaux? An unmistakable big bold banner. Is there a Bordeaux in New York State? Or is this band seriously performing show tunes in France?

No time to think about any of that now, Dwayne found me. If only I had been quieter maybe I could've avoided this whole thing!

“Hey Drummond,” Dwayne elongates the hey a bit.

“Hi Dwayne,” I say, following the script.

Dwayne ushers me to move behind the silver snare drum on a tall drum stand. In front of it is a reliable black music-stand chosen for its sturdiness among a sea of inferior disciples. I approach. He takes the sheet music from me and places it neatly on the music-stand. I set down my bag on the chair behind me, the ever familiar light wooden sound of drumsticks clunking together reverberates through the massive room. The golden audience up on the shelves can decipher a drummer from this identifying sound without fail, they've heard drummers' bags countless times before. I turn toward the drum. My feet comfortably shoulder

width apart, toes naturally turned out slightly, a minimal relaxed bend to the knees, hands in pockets.

Dwayne starts to flip through the papers on the stand searching for his commandments.

“Rudiments,” he reminds me, “are the most essential building blocks for any percussionist.”

That’s true, I sort of remember that concept from my middle school band, except Mr. Ti called us drummers. It’s one thing to know a couple rudiments on the page, and another thing to have all forty memorized. Dwayne knows them all by heart and, moreso, knows why each one is important to musical composition and the feeling of the musical phrase.

“Grab your sticks,” Dwayne suggests.

We begin with the first one, top left, Single Stroke Roll. Dwayne quizzes me first, can I play it? I answer by playing it on the drum. The drum sounds better than any drum I’ve heard in person. The entire room was designed for this, the sound frequencies bounce and absorb as planned by the foam panels on the walls and ceiling. Then Dwayne plays it on the drum and I immediately aspire to sound the same. The snare sounds even better when he plays it. His sticks are thicker, and his paws command the drum to speak up. Metal snare wires under the drum vibrate hard against the bottom drum head, the other snares in storage echo a similar softer sounding cry from afar.

“Good,” Dwayne encourages. “Again.”

The word I would come to hear a thousand times in this room for the coming months.

“Again. Again. Again,” Dwayne repeats every repetition. “One more time. One more time. One more time.”

When you play a rudiment so many times you can’t help but become competent. Dwayne is subtly teaching me how to practice at home. Over, and over again until I can’t play it wrong. We play them so many times, like repeating a word too much, they begin to lose meaning as they lodge themselves in my brain.

We’re turning the page, onto Flams and Drags. I don’t know these as well and find myself looking ahead for landmines that will potentially embarrass me.

“Pataflafla,” Dwayne utters.

Dwayne is seemingly making up words at this point. Is this a test to see if I’m paying attention? Oh, there it is, number twenty-seven. I chuckle internally at this one. I struggle to make my hands do the sticking that my eyes interpret. Flam rudiments require both hands to play at almost the same exact time, but at very different volumes. The Pataflafla has two flams right next to each other, with alternating hands. Soft right, loud left, soft left, loud right, all condensed into two adjacent sixteenth-notes. I can’t play it. Dwayne demonstrates.

“Slow it way down,” he recommends. “Don’t think of it as sixteenth-notes yet.”

He begins to click his sticks for me to play at an uncomfortably slow tempo.

I struggle at this dreadful tempo too. Dwayne circles it in pencil and we move on. We're spending less time on each one, and the page is getting heavy with number two graphite circles on almost every rudiment. Inverted Flam Taps, Swiss Army Triplet, Double Drag Tap, Lesson Twenty-five. The names aren't humorous anymore, I'm struggling to play anything now. Lesson Twenty-five? I wonder to myself if it actually takes twenty-five lessons to figure this one out. These all become homework, for me to study and practice slowly. The hour evaporates. The collection basket emerges as Dwayne subtly reminds me of the twenty dollar bill in my pocket. I take it out and hand it to him.

Dwayne smiles, "thanks."

I say goodbye and leave the room, past the trophies and cages, past the bank vault door, and out into the hallway with cavities way worse than my own. As I emerge from the building I see Dwayne's truck again and realize that I forgot all about my nerves. Wow, Dwayne was good. He seems to be a sort of magician as well as a percussive clergyman. Say the magic words and he makes the hour and nerves just disappear! I throw my bag and myself into Mom's van.

"How'd it go?" She predictably inquires.

I told her I was relieved, both because it wasn't as bad as I expected, but also because I don't have to do

it again for another seven days. She had a question for every mile we drove home, which makes sense since she's the one paying for all this, I'd want some information too. I divulge everything, the rudiments, the new homework, and even the trophies. She's up to speed, as if she was there. We park in our garage and I race to my room. I toss my bag on my practice drum pad and lay back on my bed. Now, where was I? I fall asleep as fast as I woke up, still in my clothes. I'm almost as good at drums as I am at taking naps.

The weekend dissipates. I'm sitting in English class Monday morning and finding myself Pataflafla-ing with my fingers on the desk. It doesn't dawn on me how loud my finger tapping is on the laminate desktop until the class quiets down after the bell. My teacher takes attendance with only her eyes, in silence. It's easy since our assigned seats are in alphabetical order. She then immediately stands up from her large desk and starts collecting homework.

"Pass it up," she says, collecting it the most efficient way possible for her.

The curly haired boy in front of me turns around expecting me to submit my papers with the same expression and demeanor as an airport security agent. I shake my head subtly and he turns back around, I could see his eyes roll from behind his head as he handed his work to the girl in front of him. Maybe somebody

accidentally put my name on their homework, my mind flails and reaches for anything to grasp onto. I sink into my seat. Pataflafla, Pataflafla, I try to distract myself by tapping lightly on my desk again. I switch from hitting my pointer finger's first knuckles against the desktop to instead using the pads on the tips of my fingers. I'm tip-toeing with my fingers on my desk playing drum rudiments at pianissimo in English class, instead of handing in my homework. This is all messed up! I'm still not quite getting it, but the feeling of minor frustration is preferred to the feeling of getting a zero on that homework assignment. Luckily the teacher doesn't know I didn't do it yet, I can bask in the idea that only the curly haired FAA agent and I know that I didn't do it. By the time the teacher finds out I'll at least be out of the room!

This series of events repeats ad nauseam for weeks. Lessons with Dwayne, perform for the trophies, tithe twenty bucks to the church, and find myself blindsided by a different teacher requesting different homework that I forgot about for different reasons.

I've been here before, report card in hand, creating a script in my head to explain it away while only highlighting the high grades in band and gym class. I'm a poor salesman and I already know how this pitch ends. My dad will take one look at the overall average and I'll never see my computer again, at least until June

when school is over and I somehow miraculously pass with a C average. My band grade always does most of the heavy lifting.

Obviously I'm right, my dad does his thing, usually quite loudly, belittling, and I'm back in my room without technology. I look at my drum pad. I take out my sticks. Pataflafla, Pataflafla, Pataflafla. I really start to get it, a little more each day. Swiss Army Triplets aren't bad either. I'm getting a lot closer to a target I didn't know existed back in March. Now all I have to do is find a way to get at least all C's across the line, in every subject, by the end of the school year. The strategy is not dissimilar to my all C test theory! If I can hit those targets I'll barely pass and be back on my usual routine that my family has grown accustomed to since fourth grade. Fail a little bit and climb back up to C average.

Every Sunday though, good grades or bad, I'll be continuing my drum lessons with Dwayne. Drums ultimately started to take the place of church. Percussion is now my religion, and the band room became my cathedral. Whether by coincidence or not, I started to doubt my belief in a God and instead began to believe in myself.

Read More By This Author

Drummy Drum Joins Marchy Band - 2017

Drummy Drum decides to join the marchy band but he can't decide which instrument to play. He tries all sorts of different instruments and can't find the one that fits him best. The story is about being yourself and fitting in. The book is filled with fun sounds and will entertain all ages! Whether you're reading to your kids or grandchildren, teaching a class, or know a parent that just loves band, this little 42 page book is just right!

The Field Percussion User Manual - 2015

New band directors, unfamiliar staff, and even the performers themselves can all walk away having learned something from this 136 page book. The text will answer questions that you didn't know you had and goes into great detail explaining the complexities of the marching percussion section and the properties of their sound.

Quadratics: The Tenor Drum Equation - 2013

Quadratics is a 150 page book specifically designed for the tenor drums. These six drums get a lot of attention throughout this publication. Anyone looking to further their understanding of this instrument will learn to appreciate the subtleties that this text uncovers. From the performer to the composer, and everywhere in between, this is an incredibly useful guide!

*Books are available at many major online retailers
and at PRFB.net*