

# Fats

by John Olson

It began the night my parents took my brother and I to see *The Vikings* at the drive-in and the trailer for *The Girl Can't Help It* came on the screen, introduced by the completely acceptable Tom Ewell, which the folks could swallow, he was one of them, but as soon as we saw Fats Domino sitting at the piano rocking out and looking joyful as all New Orleans during Mardi Gras my parents freaked. There was no way on earth I was going to see that movie. And that's when I first felt it. Rebellion. Anger. The exquisite feeling that something dangerous and exciting has occurred. That acute sense of division and the first thrill of subversion. You awaken to a power within and recognize it as something crucial to your survival. Which is also a little scary. Because you love your parents. They give you food and shelter. They give you guidance and council and comfort. But that feeling is telling you something different. That feeling is telling you that you're not still just a kid but a developing creature. A thing that is alien to your parents. A life and an attitude different from your parents. I don't think I knew what a chrysalis was at the time. But what I would've appreciated the metaphor. That metamorphosis all living creatures including human beings go through. That propulsion out of the chrysalis and into the light where those goopy wings stretch out and start to dry and turn translucent in the sun. Which becomes years of growth and frustration and disappointment and occasional triumph. Sometimes sweet redemption. But mostly the shine of potential. Which becomes car wrecks and drugs and music. Which becomes philosophy and finance and medication. Walls hurdled, doors slammed. Arrest and conviction. Perfume and addiction. Collisions, frictions, mosquito coasts. Nine cars. Three marriages. Champagne popped in green rooms. And years later listening to Fats Domino you discover that moment is still there, even in old age, there it is, shining behind your eyes, hot and edgy and dangerous. Mad. Totally crazy. Like the French Quarter during Mardi Gras.

