

Dizzy

by Jürgen Fauth

The moment I get off the streetcar, I see the red and blue lights reflecting off the white walls of the Jewish Community Center across from my house, and I know they are there for me. I've been picking pockets in the Quarter all day, and I feel tired and hungry and crabby, in no mood to be arrested and have my life change forever quite yet. It's never good to get arrested on an empty stomach.

So I stuff my hands deep down my pockets, keep my head low, and walk straight past my house where three NOPD cars are pulled up on the lawn. Across the street, Jewish kids are screaming in the pool. I don't dare look up to see if the cops are inside. I hurry past, turn on Prytania, then down all the way to Magazine, to Guy's Po-Boys. A po-boy is exactly what my delirious stomach is longing for, and only after I devour a fully dressed oyster on French can my head begin to deal with the fact that at least six of New Orleans' finest are digging through all my belongings right now waiting for me to return home so they can carry me off to jail, and from there, Angola.

I count my earnings: 340 dollars, 1000 francs, and some American Express Travelers checks in German marks that won't do me any good. Seven credit cards that might still work for another day or so. A handful of drivers licences but none of them remotely look like me. A card for the Englewood, New Jersey public library. What the hell did I keep that for?

"Hey Osmo," somebody says. I twitch. "You coming to the show tonight?" It's Kermit Ruffins, the trumpeter. I'm a regular at his Wednesday night gigs at the Bon Temps. Kermit swings hard.

"Sorry, Kermit," I say. "I think I'm in a bit of trouble. Gotta blow town."

Kermit puts his fingers to his lips, pretending to puff on a joint, rolling his eyes like Satchmo. "Reefer trouble?"

"Worse than that," I say. I'm flipping through my stack of stolen cards as if they are a tarot deck.

"Sorry to hear that," Kermit says. "Where're you gonna go?"

I hold out the deck of cards, and Kermit cuts it. Englewood, New Jersey.

"That's where Dizzy died," Kermit says.

