

Margaret & Beak Discuss Jazz for The Last Time

by Kathy Fish

It rained hard all morning. They had to raise their voices to be heard over the noise of it. Beak's toes, dangling out under the awning, were numb from the pelting, nearly frozen. Beak always wore sandals.

"Do you want to..." He leaned forward. "Do you want to hear some jazz this evening?"

They were drinking coffee outside the Brasserie du Montparnasse.

"Where?" Margaret asked. "To tell you the truth I've come to hate the jazz. No offense."

Beak took no offense. He lit a slim, brown cigarette and drew on it. "But have you heard the flugelhorn? I mean, have you heard a particularly adept flugelhorn?"

Margaret allowed that she had not. There were many things she'd not heard. She felt, however, that she'd heard enough.

The waiter balanced a tray of fresh coffees, holding a menu over his head. They took the cups and nodded their thanks. The waiter rushed away. The rain blew sideways now, the daisy in the center of the table swung round in its vase. Beak pushed his chair back further under the awning, protecting his feet.

"Let's leave," Margaret said.

Beak spooned sugar into his cup and stirred in a leisurely fashion.

"Okay," she said, "but after this. Immediately after this. Maybe we could see a film. Do you want to see a film? I'm so sick of the jazz."

"What?"

"I'm so sick of the jazz!" She shivered. Really, it was not a good day. "My stomach hurts."

Beak lifted his newspaper and flipped both sides back and folded it in half, running the side of his hand along the crease.

"It says here..."

"It's the coffee. It's too strong. My stomach's a ball of acid right now." Margaret wrapped her arms around her middle.

"Well, stop drinking it then. Here, I'll take it." Beak pulled her cup towards him. "It says here the flugelhorn is the deepest, most mysterious of the jazz instruments. Furthermore..."

"I'll call Carolyn. Maybe she and Jack would like to see a film." Margaret watched a drenched cat dash across the avenue. It raced up a chestnut tree after a squirrel.

"Furthermore, a particularly adept flugelhorn, the sound of it, the timbre, has the ability to transport. Did you hear that, Margaret? Transport! Now. Wouldn't you like to be transported?"

"Beak, we're the only ones out here. I'm cold. My stomach hurts. Do I want to be transported? Yes. Take me home."

"Do you know that one side of your face is a little lower than the other?"

"Beak..."

"I'm serious! Your mouth, your eyelid. Margaret, have you had a stroke? Look, it stopped raining! Now you're being silly. Sit down, sit down! I promise we'll go in five minutes."

"I wonder if we should get a divorce."

"Now there's a question! Sit down, we can talk about it. We can discuss it reasonably. Are you sure you're up for it, though? Maybe we should discuss it tomorrow. We'll go to a film tonight. We'll go with Jack and Carolyn. We'll have the best evening of our lives. We'll get very drunk and then go home and have exceedingly passionate sex and in the morning, we'll discuss it. But you..." Beak touched Margaret's nose, "...won't feel like it anymore."

