

Ode to New Orleans

By Kara Moyer

An hour there, you swindle twenty bucks
from me because I miss the shoe-shine joke
and sticky liquor puddles stain my boots—
a tricky welcome to Creole Dixie but
I love you instantly, Big Easy, beg
you, please, to levee me against myself
tonight as I am drenched in January grays
and diving deep in you to find reprieve—
delirious from driving, futile angst
that almost turned me back in Arkansas.

I want the fixins, all your grand parades.
I fled to you instead of Mexico, or Rome,
because you're cheaper, closer, like the dive
with dollar drafts and cigarette machines
a block from home. No Pantheon or beach
to burn my pasty soles, no passport stamps.

But cast your voodoo spells instead and charm
me back to heedlessness. I'm out to swill
the world—café au lait and sweet beignets
when I am soused again at foggy dawn.
Convince me I'm alone, at last, among
this crowd. You are the lagniappe I have craved.

At three a.m. when rain begins again I find
the balcony, champagne I swiped from home.
The marching band in Jackson Square howls, howls
through tarnished horns, down antique alley ways.

I peer between the parted drapes inside
a flat across the street—its fleur de lis insignias
above the doors, a chandelier too similar to one
I hung at home—and scheme my grand escape.
Salut to Expeditus, Saint of Prompt
Solutions. Nola, you were made for me.