

Stormy Weather

He'd been wandering the streets aimlessly, wondering what he was going to do with the rest of his life - assuming he decided to live the rest of his life. It was 5pm on a wet fall Saturday afternoon, one of those times when the dusk is setting in and the street lamps are starting to come on, yet there is still sufficient light in the sky to reflect off puddles in the road and on the pavement. It's actually quite a magical thing to experience.

As he walked he became aware of a mix of vivid beautiful colours emanating from a board of neon lights a block or so away and, having no particular direction or ambition, let himself be drawn to them. Arriving at the doorway underneath the bright lights which had enticed him he could hear slow music played by a standard band of the time, cornet, sax, piano and gently sizzling percussion. Should he go in? He hesitated. What was there to lose? The lightly drizzling rain began to intensify and he was already quite damp through. He entered. A sign declared that an afternoon tea dance was in progress. He enquired of the desk-girl if he was too late but she assured him with a smile that he most certainly wasn't. He paid the very reasonable entrance fee, handed his hat and raincoat to the cloakroom attendant, walked down a short corridor and found himself standing on the dance floor.

She too had been wandering the streets aimlessly, wondering how she was ever again going to feel that life was worth living. She was a lost soul. Seeing those wonderful neon lights had made her feel even worse. It was as if they were saying 'everyone else around here is having a great time'. But she had nothing better to do and so had also let herself be drawn toward them, not expecting anything particular to come of it.

But now? Now they came face to face, the only two people not dancing dreamily to the soft music coming from the small band. The cornet was just ending a soulful solo when a female crooner stepped up to the microphone.

*"Don't know why
There's no sun up in the sky
Stormy weather
Since my man and I ain't together
Keeps rainin' all the time"*

What a song. One that was big in the hit parade right now, popularised by Ethel Waters but here being sung so very sweetly by *their* singer.

It would be an exaggeration to say they fell into each other's arms but their communication was almost wordless and instinctive. He had raised an eyebrow, hesitantly preparing to ask "Would you care to dance, Miss?" but before they knew it they were intertwined, moving slowly to the music. Some questions and answers followed quietly – names, where they lived, why they were here. It seemed they were both here for the same reasons. They spoke of lost relationships, neither of them having been at fault, of being adrift in the directions of their lives. They spoke too of how they had both found Antero's within minutes of each other. And of how the music seemed to fit the circumstance of their meeting.

The song changed. Georgia On My Mind.

If only nothing else would change and they could be here, like this, forever.

Outside, in the dark and the pouring rain, passers-by hurried on their way barely noticing the doorway underneath a dimly flickering light bulb trying its best to illuminate a sign declaring 'Jack's Quick 'n' Easy Jive Hall. Entry just One Buck Fifty includes your first shot'.