



the tales they tell on the boul-michel

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Jack and Jam were battling it out as usual. This time it was over another bottle of house red that Jack wanted to order, he was that extravagantly pleased with himself tonight. The novel was going well, he had just finished chapter seventy-four, he was sure he could sell it soon. Jam wrote poetry but held the pursestrings. Because of her they had never been evicted, as had their better-heeled but improvident friends. Both of them were thin as rails.

Jam suggested another sausage instead. What they didn't eat Jam would bring back to their room and add to the string bag of provisions that dangled from a hook in the ceiling so the rats couldn't get at it. Jack could have sausage with his chicory coffee the next day. But Jack said that wasn't the right way to celebrate.

Jam was almost ready to let him order his damned wine so she could have the pleasure of "conking it over his head." Jack's novel was about his Dakota boyhood. Jam's poetry was about fiery gypsies, stolen princesses, and castles in the snow, among other things.

Suddenly there was a commotion in the streets, car horns and shouting, the works. Madame Ygrec paused only to smooth her chignon before going out to investigate. She rushed back in with the news.

"It's Lindbergh! Lindbergh! He has landed at Le Bourget! Long live Lindbergh!" All this, of course, in French.

"What's this? What's this?" asked Jack, jumping up from the table. "What does the radio say?" But Madame Ygrec did not yet possess a radio.

"Do you want to try to reach Le Bourget?" Jam asked Jack.

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"No, let's just— " started Jack, and then took her by the hand and led her outside onto the sidewalk. He looked up and so did she. Even past the city lights the sky was dark, darker than it is nowadays. And filling with stars!

The intersection that had been so quiet was now wild with traffic headed for the airfield. And on the other side of the street they could see Ed and Bill and Jim and Betty and Grace, who would all one day write about them, waving excitedly, champagne bottles in hand, for them to cross and join their celebration.

"Jam turned to Jack and was astonished to see tears rolling down his cheeks. He said softly, "I love America."

Jam squeezed his hand and decided to go back in and let him order the house red. Life wasn't long, she thought, which was true in Jack's case, for that winter he died of pneumonia and was buried in Pere Lachaise, where he lies to this day.

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