

Jazz Funeral

Abe Louise Young / Remixed for Aaron by Sasha Thaler

New Orleans was one of Aaron's favorite places. And though I've never been there, I know that there is a tradition in the city of having a musical procession as part of a funeral. The poem I will share with you describes one of these Jazz Funerals. But there are a few things you should know before I start.

A Colt 40 is a 40-oz can of the *highest* quality malt beverage.

To second line is to join in the funeral procession.

Brass-hop is hip-hop music with a brass band background.

Terranova's is a supermarket.

The Park is City Park, near Lake Pontchartrain.

The Esplanade is a storied avenue running through the Faubourg St. John Neighborhood. And it passes by the Race Track at the fairgrounds where the Jazz and Heritage Festival is held.

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Smashed Colt 40's glitter the path
of the Big Easy funeral parade --

STOP signs shiver, whammed with wood
as the dead boy's brother

jumps and hits them, pummels the metal --
a red note sounds pure and high,

then the stop sign goes skidding to asphalt,
broken, satisfied.

Glass litters the street down Esplanade, past Terranova's,
past the Race Track, and the bayou, to the Park.

An old woman in hot pants second lines
under a raggedy pink lace umbrella:

tuxedo trumpet and walking bass wail.
The dead boy's uncles hoist his picture on poles

trailing long yellow ribbons,
Granddad drives slowly behind in a lowrider

pumping brass-hop:
When the Saints Go Marching In, half static.

Two sisters twist & break a crepe myrtle branch
tiny hot pink flowers shower down on the hot crowd.

A hidden moon carved with a sharp stylus rocks out the sky;
collard green seeds taste like batteries.

Wind smells like whiskey and incense.
Life sucks a bittersweet nectar out of the street.

His life was lived, now dance. Dance goodbye,
show Death your sexiest dress,

kiss grief off, don't cry.
Dance, dance, while the music rolls.