

EXCERPT

PAGE 110

Angela Davis has plenty to say about Los Angeles cops, a racist bunch if ever there was one, and about their rural Tennessee and Alabama colleagues who would beat up Blacks and steal whatever alcohol they might be carrying—illegally, so they claimed—across state lines.

I can still remember the nasty cops of South Paris, in the state of Maine, in the early 1960s. Unjustly they threw us in the slammer, me and a friend from Bord-de-l’Eau; but what they really wanted was to get a closer look at our passenger, a twenty-year-old looker. Kerouac writes: “It’s a Victorian police force; it peers out of musty windows and wants to enquire about everything, and can make crime if the crimes don’t exist to its satisfaction.”

Depending on the nature of the operation Jean-Yves would let us know whether to stay in the car, or to get out—compulsorily or if we wished. He was completely focused on his work. Showed me what he saw on his computer screen: the squad car dispatch board and call priority. Mike knew it all already. Jean-Yves could, if necessary, call up the mug shot and criminal record of anybody who had one. I said I’d like to see his father’s.

We’d been on patrol less than fifteen minutes when a Priority 1 call came in. Someone had spotted a guy carrying a revolver getting into a pick-up on St. André Street. People think that cops are just like everybody else. Totally false. The cop has a firearm, a club, and handcuffs. He is authorized by law, if he deems it necessary, to deprive you of your liberty, which is not exactly nothing. He answers to the Criminal Investigation Bureau, which answers directly to the Creator. He can even vaporize you with his magnum.

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