

*All the cries of the earth echo in my belly.*

My name is . . . Actually, my name doesn't matter. The whores, they don't give a fuck if you're a writer or anything else. You pay them. They make you come. And you get the hell out after. Just like nothing happened. For the rest of us, the clients, it's the same: our names don't matter. It's like going all over the place shouting that the world is round. That God exists. And yet, the earth has never been as round as the existence of God. . . . "I'm a writer." That's what I tell them when people ask me what I do for a living. An affirmation that somehow for me rings false, since I write with death and in death. This place escapes weightiness. Escapes time-space. Between elsewhere and childhood. The moment when *this thing* happened, I was rereading *Les Fleurs du mal*. Baudelaire is a real bird of ill omens. He always comes with death on the tip of his beak. The last time, it was a violent nervous breakdown. I only just barely snapped out of it. She seemed to have understood the power of writing by asking me to write this book about Grand Rue. For all of the other whores that disappeared in *this thing*. A book, she said, to make them living, immortal. She told me her story. I only had to transform it. Find the correct formulation to explain her pain, her memories, her anxieties and everything else . . . To write with another at the helm. With her tears, her silence trailing each word. Each parcel of unknown earth, unnavigable . . . Taken by the strip-tease of death. What had Grand Rue had become. Port-au-Prince. The city where I grew up. The city of my first poems. I wasn't sure that I could make it. For me, sex and alcohol were the best therapy. I ran from everything, even writing. I mean, I didn't want to write immediately, at least I

thought it wasn't possible. . . . Swimming in whiskey, I slid into the infamous landscape of this room that stank of shit and death and drowned myself in its ocean of whores. It's the first time that I entered a whorehouse with an *a priori* as egotistical as the pleasure of floating amongst the stars. . . . She lit a cigarette, took a long drag and let escape a thick cloud of smoke from her mouth, and then from her nose. To me, she looked phenomenal with her whorish wiles.

—So, what do you do for a living?

My favorite question.

—I'm a writer.

—A writer! That works out great. . . . You give me what I ask you for and after you can have me in any way you desire.

Deal. I first just had to write and then fuck her. This idea was rather pleasing to me. After all, books don't sell so well. Writing for sex. That could compensate certain things. She moved toward the window to contemplate, not without bitterness, the immense valley of concrete and white dust outside. The irreparable. The ineffable. The despair that flowed from people's eyes. The city of rubble, shredded, saturated in identifiable, unidentifiable, and synthesized dead people, creating all sorts of geometric figures. Then suddenly, like that, improvising like a punch to the mouth, she let loose a sentence that swept away the silence: "The little girl. She's still stuck under the rubble, twelve days after having prayed to all of the saints . . ."

The time has now come to go searching for her treasure. I have nothing more to do here. I owe her at least that much, after all that we've been through together. It's the only way for me to redeem myself for having offered her a place on my raft drifting away aimlessly. These frenzies that have over time worn away my youth. Into an empty calabash. I'm going to leave to find what meant the most to her in all her fucking life. Her son. But before, I want to recount. Let the blood flow from my words. Recount. Redemption. If only it were so simple.

The little girl. She was dead after twelve days under the rubble, after having prayed to all of the saints. That night, the earth drifted. Fluttered. Danced. Self-harmed in order to exhume itself from within. Tore itself apart. Laid on the ground like the dead. Traipsing over its own wreckage.

I still remember the day where she broke all the bonds between us and ran off with this man, this so-called professor of literature. She hated that we interfered in her personal affairs. Did she also prefer to be elsewhere the whole day so to not have to put up with my frequent nervous breakdowns . . . Useless to dig up old bones now. Let's begin. I'll talk. You, the writer, you write. You transform. The others always begin with prayer. I want us to begin with poetry. She loved poetry.

*And I who was time*  
*Space, the crossing*  
*The beginning and the end*  
*The splendors of the world*  
*All the cries of the earth*  
*Echo in my belly*

—Not bad, writer. It looks like you're reading the depths of my soul.

In the end, a male poet is a little bit like a woman knocked up by words.

The Red BMW Man never washes himself. I realized it from the smell of herring he gave off. I feel on the verge of tears when my body beneath him acts as a site of mystery and redemption. I dream of being one of these children who aren't yet aware of their actions. These children that I have left unborn out of selfishness. Out of a love for starkness. He reeks, certainly, but he is generous, always giving into my whims as a woman for sale, as a woman with fluvial expectations.

My name is . . . Actually, my name doesn't matter. My name is the last piece of intimacy I have left. The clients don't really give a fuck. They pay. I make them come. And they leave like it was nothing. That's all.

The little girl. I'm the one who taught her all she knows about the profession and the street.

—We're insignificant, on the order of mirages. Your body is your sole instrument, little girl.

Yet, I was only ashamed by the idea that this single window was the only viable part, the only part capable of putting me up for sale.



Nothing was like it was before. Before, I thought that each passerby was a star, capable of making me forget once and for all. To forget that I am a part of a long line of whores, that I am myself a whore, that my future depends on it. To forget her voice beneath the rubble, a broken voice calling for help. Shit, how to forget?

The little girl. When she jumped on board the irreversible she was at the age where words hesitate. Wet, furtive words, not of any language, rather that of the *sine qua non*. An obligatory journey. Twelve years in the face of night. Free to be alone, whatever she wanted. Twelve years becoming herself.

The words, my love, are the lairs of blood and screams. I'm telling this for you, my little girl. I'm telling you and calling you from my internal exile. From my most secret, most distant island. The words, my love, are silent. My gestures also name you. All of my body's words could not suffice to tell you the earth's pain.

Everyone spoke of the end of time or of the end of the world. Me, I thought of the little girl; I don't know what the end of time or the end of the world is like, nor the end of anything. It's always after the rain, comes the sun. The sea is blue. The girls are pretty. The dogs bark. The passersby pass and pass. Where to? I still hear their mumbling, the breath of these filthy beasts, thirsting for depth. These passersby, these beasts who once thought themselves to be human.

Everything began in her eyes many days before. Just after this dream that she refused to tell. It wasn't yet the end, in the first seconds. Something had just slipped beneath our feet, defying the imperialism of our joy. It was brief.

The little girl. She was the first to scream. The last one also to pass away. After twelve days. After having prayed to all of the saints. She, as frail as she was, spent many days stuck beneath all that men consider the mark of greatness, of social mobility.

Me? Understand? I only asked you to write, to play your role as a writer while I speak. How dare you ask me that? Poetry isn't supposed to understand. Only to feel. To feel until you cry or vomit. Sometimes she cried after reading your nonsense. I never asked myself the reason why this taxi driver payed me twice what he earned during the day for twelve years just so that he could sleep in my bed. Without touching me once. How do you expect me to understand what happened that night?

The little girl. She had the ability to see the future in her dreams. If she told you that the street will be dirty at twelve twenty-six and ten seconds and that two people will lose their lives, it's sure to happen. And she can recall everything in strong detail. She can even tell you their sort, the exact place where these people will die like dogs. We say that the street is dirty when the big bad bandits come out of their lairs to sow trouble. To reign supreme streets over the streets with impunity. To make bullets sing. To quench their thirst for blood. Each time we asked her to recall her dream, she said it was nothing. But her eyes had already deceived her. Her eyes too full of sorrow to not announce a misfortune so close in proximity. Speaking of misfortune, why does the image of the taxi driver come to me all of the sudden?

That day, the bedroom still reeked from the passage of clients. Here, a sort of disorder reigned that felt irreparable. She spent the whole day on the moon, in her fucking novels. She's like that, the little girl. There are those days where she's a machine, she can do it all. And others where she rejects everything and plunges into her books. Where she scorns everything. But this time, it had nothing to do with her dirty feet or a client's bad breath or an accidently broken nail. She just said that she had a dream that could not be told.



The Red BMW Man is quite different from the others. When he takes possession of me—one might say he is like a ferocious beast that hasn't eaten for an eternity and had found a rotting carcass in the road—my belly responds like the epicenter of a violent earthquake. I ask myself how a human being can have such an enormous member and have such a foul stench.

With time, I learned to get used to his member and his stench. In this country you must set your priorities, identify what is indispensable to your life, or rather, to your survival. In my profession, you can't waste time being picky, weighing the consequences, choosing. You don't know how to choose when you're paid to dole out pleasure. To suck and suck some more without the right to have had enough, to no longer want anymore. To be treated like a dog. But when it comes to these tiny details, this man takes pity. He's too vulnerable. Like the targets that are constantly caught in the crosshairs of others. And we've hardly started on him. We say that he looks like one of those stupid animals that enjoys itself bouncing from branch to branch eating bananas all the livelong day. That he walks with his ass clamped shut like a dog on the verge of shitting. But I like him fine. He's my animal. I want to have him all. But he pays me. For example, to smack my ass when he fucks me.

—Shake that thing!

The little girl. She shouldn't have taken cover inside that half-dozen story monster. She dishonored me. As well as all the other immortals of Grand Rue. The street had always been our only shelter, our only place to be among everyone else . . . I must ask you, writer, to remove that part. It feels like it's already been said, recycled. But, don't we also write with the words of others?

No, she shouldn't have preferred that concrete monster to our little end of the street because she didn't understand at all what was happening, never heard about it, never saw trembling earth unleash itself, rippling like a dugout canoe on a stormy sea; even the spirited reader of Jacques Stephen Alexis that she was.