

THE RAMBLE

A translation by Jacques Houis of LA BALLADE by Patrick MacAvoy. René Julliard, 1966.

May the ancient poem return, may he ravage me, pull the pin from my grenade... one...two...three...four! And that's when, dazzling, I burst upon the scene, immense, with the scepter in my right hand and the globe in my left, always naked, always half dead, dripping with blood; let centuries pass, along with cars and friends, and let me find myself alone in this room, cooped up with a stake through my stomach...

The shutters swing, the shutters slap the hospital and the night, six o'clock rings, seven o'clock thunders in my swollen legs, August spills out, runs through the valley toward the sea; a flower tries to reach my window, but around here winter persists and neither suns nor people rise. Winter bites down on my arms. Around me, doctors, women, servants come and go, dressed in sheets of ice. O may the ancient poem return, may he travel on foot, may he leave his Orient for me, may he save me, plunge me into boiling water, into molten iron, yes, yes into the hold along with him, in shackles along with him, with his flying eyes, with his army and his golden keys, with his chest as the only landscape.

Fly! Crazy fly! drunken fly! junkie fly, fly propelled at one hundred miles an hour! (that's what they told me before trying to cure me) why knock yourself out against every wall? The window panes won't yield either, you know that, the spaces under the doors are too narrow, the bars too close together, the traps too well laid. Drunken fly, lively fly! My love is the wall I will crash into, hot-rod going two hundred miles an hour; he will enter the room where I am, but to enter the room where I am is already to enter my body; he won't find it hard to tear my skin, to pierce my tumors, my buboes, he will treat me with his saliva- the salt of which has stayed in all the crevices of my body and my memory. Rohannes! Rohannes' smoke hasn't made me forget anything, the rabid trains travel through my veins: never has a signal deterred them. Have I lived a single day? I have lived a night, a dawn and the twelve strokes of noon have knocked me out twelve times. Anne, Anne do you remember the night in Rohannes? You've gone places since then in your wheelchair. The trains whistled around five o'clock. The workers left the armament factory an hour later, and Sundays it was the people, dressed up, with the movie they just saw coming apart inside their heads.

June. I was waiting for him, I was waiting for him since November. "I've loved you for a hundred years!" Pious virgin with the hair of a virgin's son in the virginal light: "Stick a cigarette between my lips and a wink in my heart! Heels this high! A crown of rose thorns on my mug and a mouth full of swear-words!" Last night of June. But who cares about June? Who cares about the imaginary river and the martial barges, the nuptial skies, the sidereal cries, Rohannes' smoke, the princely whores?! My flesh has fissured, my tears will no longer fall on my feet, my calls will no longer open doors!

O trains! O my summers in lock-up! My leprosy climbs Everest, my breath invades the fields where the daisies committed suicide; oh! I'll poke everyone's eyes out so they can't see me anymore, I'll break all the mirrors, I'll pollute the waters so I don't have to meet myself anymore, I'll break my shadow's neck! My fat! Right down to my shadow's wrinkles! O may the ancient poem return, may he pull my pin! Come my love, my fortune, there will be four of us: you, you in me (delirious and singing through my

mouth), me (crushed, gaping), me in you (ranting and tearing myself off the ground), come you are already the world, you are already life and death, drugs and sap, white, black, you will be gold, the stars, the galaxies. Others are suspect. I am suspect.

He fills my empty hours, my empty years, my empty centuries, by making his crotch swell for one second. He closes his eyes and his fists, he crosses a street, enters a café and tries to hide in his sweater this letter that he is sending me, and he is laughed at, they almost want to touch it. He breaks a bottle (he is still hard), turns around suddenly, checks out his adversaries who soon kneel before him, kiss his hands while imploring his forgiveness...

I see him. He is laughing and his teeth are phosphorescent.

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He sets out. He leaves the city and plunges into the bush where he will kill the snakes and the hideous creatures that live in the waters; he camps out at night, alone next to a fire, and seems to listen to my complaint; he goes straight towards Rohannes; he is coming to stop the mechanism of my convulsions, he is coming to inoculate me with beauty. He overcomes the wind gusts and the rain, he stifles a volcano and drinks its lava, with the grace of a naked child, he walks in the savanna, plays in the forest with the vines, the birds, the streams. He arrives in a town like a marvelous cataclysm: a barrel of wine! Ten barrels of wine! All of your girls' flowers, and bejeweled weapons! And more wine! And kisses for the weapons, kisses for the wine, kisses for the girls, kisses for the flowers! He leaves the following day. In a red desert. Then a blue mountain chain, then an ochre plain. Then burnt hills, high snow covered peaks, glaciers, lakes that he does not bypass but that he enters in order to emerge on the other side, soaked like a sword, with sparkling droplets on his cheekbones, under his eyes, under his lips, his curly hair flat on his forehead. Then a frontier he just flicks away. An abandoned city. Suburbs, outskirts, avenues, splendidly hostile poor neighborhoods. Boulders he cuts in two and hundred year old trees he splits apart. Tomorrow he will pass through arenas where a dying bull lies on the ground, climb the steps while humming a tune, then leap into a street of whitewashed houses. In the same city, buzzing with heat, he will give an insect a message for me, finally he will bow down before the sea. He will eat shellfish, rape a lost shepherd, sleep in the dampness of a simoon come to expire there, and the colorful daylight beside him, standing on the Atlas mountains, he will begin to swim north

to swim

to swim

his cock a prow

in the sea. I lose sight of him when he is in the hollow of a wave, I reach out my hands when I see his head or his shoulders, but he has already disappeared, supplanted in my heart by anxiety as brief as it is violent. It appears between two beats, and it is in the hollows, of course, that this anxiety resides.

In the hollows the insomnias huddle, a chain of insomnias with tight links.

THE NURSE

“Look at her, doctor. Masturbation and cigarettes. What should I do?”

THE DOCTOR

“How many times a night does she masturbate, and how many cigarettes does she smoke?”

A ROOMMATE

“A single masturbation and a single cigarette, but both so painful and so long that they last all night and dawn alone can interrupt them. Dawn catches her in flagrante. She panics. Wretched, wretched panic. She shows both of her hands while crying and giggling: ‘My haschish and my boxon, my heroin and my stilet.’”

They leave. They will be back tomorrow; the hypocritical nurse and the doctor, calmly and monstrously male. In the meantime my roommate won't talk to me. For such a long time now they have come close to me in order to accuse me. Sometimes they sit on the edge of my bed; but the doctor prefers to stand and observe me coldly. They're afraid of me: they think I can transform my suffering into another kind of energy that I would be sure to turn against them whenever I felt like it; they think there is a distance between me and my suffering and they refuse to learn that it is thanks to me that they are healthy since they have loaded me with all their diseases. They've hidden beauty from themselves like a turd, ugliness like a turd, and they have become turds. If I were a man, and sick on top of it, I would raise an army of all the sick people on earth and I would go out and conquer the world. Then we would invent health.

Such are my thoughts in this place, my thoughts flying close to the ground, my fantasies, my obscene embryos. Because I must not have anything to do with thought, in other words, with the world. I am already a saint because I don't have, I almost don't have any ideas. I leave the unreal world saying “in the name of bones, of blood, of sperm and tears!” In a word, I am condemned, condemned by the swindlers who made the world unreal! I know! I know the only thing: I know that I touch you, and were I no more than the finger that touches your eyes, then I'm saved.

One of his hairs is more than America, a look, more than far away peregrinations toward the sun, because he is what you drink and what rises, sea and cloud.

His name with my nails on paper, his name enormous on the white walls, on the white gowns, his name written with my teeth, his name written in the blood of my periods, his name hollered down the long hallways: “Stéphane! Stéphaneane!” Six thousand years before Stéphane, the year 2000 before Stéphane, the year 1 before him it was still chaos, one minute before him it was still chaos, so don't come to me talking about all kinds of people who supposedly said or did this or that, who are even supposed

to have just existed. No mother could have made him. I created him, piece by piece, bit by bit. So beautiful that no mother could make him, could understand every fiber of his crowded abdomen! So beautiful that he makes me beautiful, me with my scabs and my blisters. His name written by the mountain ridges, by the river meanders, by the paths, by my tangled hair, by all things: his name a shot to my head! The plants grow under you, the houses are built under you, life crawls, I crawl, I lick your feet on your arrival, I lick your feet and your exhausted knees, I rearrange my face against your bones, I put on the face of a punch-drunk boxer, the face of a crazy old madam, of an Egyptian queen: I am everything when I crash into you, O my wine, O my clearing in the middle of the suffocating Amazon; marry me a thousand times over, or make me go around the world on your intimate sidewalks. Give me ropes to hang or escape myself with, give me the photograph of my murderer, give me the fires that burnish your skin like interminable menstruations poured over me, give me even your farts; I will turn them into real domains trod upon by you, and the earth will exhale then, finally, its breath.

He strikes me, beats me, but his blows free me from the swoon the riff-raff suppose corresponds to my death. No, no other cruise is possible, and I can prove it. I can proclaim it given the legitimacy of my claims, namely that I possess within me the revolutions and the geological catastrophes, the cyclones, the tidal waves.

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Fascination with death, since you execute me, but you execute me the way a castle is pillaged and set on fire, by giving it the triumph of its martyrdom: you are the mine I use to scuttle myself, and if you murder me it is not to camouflage my body afterwards. I caress the contours of his anger. I graft his sacred anger on everything that approaches me, on everything that brushes against me. I fill the silence with it, I fill the noise, I make music and speech gorge on it. I caress the contours of his anger, and let it be known, friend or passerby, that he abolishes the dimensions, every dimension, since everything comes down to him or up to him. I am but the infinite fence that bars his path toward the horizon. I am only there to acclaim him and proclaim him. I will holler. Like a drunk woman, like an engine gone haywire, like a fire alarm, like a bomb, like a handcuffed prostitute, like a betrayed plotter (I too will betray. I will betray the innocents, I will betray God and the Devil, fair weather and foul, prayer, blasphemy, oh, for him, what I believe and what I don't give a damn about! For him I would shit on this world and the other, but let him allow me to lick his feet on his arrival), like a shrew, like a harpy, like a dog, the lowest of the mongrels. "Stéphaane!" And he says "Shut up, I'm here! Come with me to the corner dive, the bois-charbon. We'll drink red wine and talk to the local lushes..." And his smile leaves me teetering, and his disdainful gaze in the direction of the evening, and my bullshit...on the walls of the room, everywhere...his grimace as he looked at the reproductions of paintings and the portraits of actors, of pale lovers, of dancers. And he raced down the stairs like he did me, the last time he left me.

The entire Orient as a gift!

Here, he is a juvenile delinquent, farther on he will capture the lights and you will discover yourself when you cross his path, elsewhere he will be naked. Shimmering. He will laugh at the precipices. He will rest his hand on my shoulder, his hand will devour me while we walk along the canal, his hand will play with me as with a ball that he will send far into the air, into the rain puddles, against the hospital's façade, which will crack. I will walk, my head turned toward him, entirely dilated in order to receive like manna from heaven the least glance come my way. Elsewhere, he will be naked. I will say: You! We will pass in front of the train station, a building ennobled by our presence, then we will set off on our return journey...

The three blows bashed in my chest and the clock striking noon knocked me out twelve times : those are the parameters of my story. A gong ten meters in diameter announces my entrance into the throne room. Three times. What dress was I wearing that evening? How was my hairdo? It isn't out of vanity that I ask myself these questions, it's to remember his movements: how did he go about letting my hair out? untying my belt and tying my throat? removing my pumps? What parts of my skull did he search looking for my barrettes or was it simply a ribbon that held my hair and let it sweat or run down my back? In the stairwell I could no longer make out his features, he whispered "How much for a trick?" And I went "All the ingots on earth." But I was thinking "All the empires, the beaches, the dresses, the perfumes, the boats, the necklaces, the furs... for one trick." And he: "I'll pay you with spit, it's the only currency I know." And I'm waiting. I beg for his spittle. I anoint myself with it. I cover my face, my neck, my breasts, my belly with it. Sometimes his spittle is green and sometimes silvery, or it hardens on my skin! Or sometimes he spits so much saliva that he sprays the walls behind me; I bathe in it, I drink it, I freeze it and boil it. His spits are so powerful they risk wounding me, and like a slap in the face, they shove my face onto my shoulder. If they hit me in the forehead, my head is rocked back. I see him sometimes, not saying a word, excruciatingly attentive, taking his turn to be immobile and leaving all the space in the universe to me alone, forcing me to move with unexpected slowness, and his eyes record, direct the film of my majesty. I accomplish several mediocre tasks that become, thanks to his will, more intense than liturgies, rites and worship; thus he gives back to gestures their inextinguishable beauty, their autonomy, miles from necessity. Walking is more than dancing, caressing more than swimming, opening your hand or grasping an object is more beautiful than joining them in prayer; there are no more symbols, or rather, no more language if it isn't that, still quite impoverished, of exasperation. We are ignorant of pleasure because pleasure, by definition, is impersonal. The only thing left that can vanquish us is the revenge of meat time, of the germ. But I will draw like I bellowed. I will draw him with come, with sweat, on the paving stones; I will go from town to town posting my indelible drawings: "One hundred million reward for the safe return..." and not only in Rohannes and Paris, but also Hong-Kong, Moscow, Acapulco... When he wants to leave, I will put him in a cage. I will give him food at the end of a pole. I will plug up all the exits of his room. I know my strength. I know my weakness, strength and

weakness belong to him. No. He is my strength and my weakness, my love and my cruelty. Where are you?

In the bottom of what serac, in the back of what disreputable alley, tell me, my hoodlum, in what hole, in what trafficking are you to be found? Have you gone to war? But does the war exist? He is waging war against me: the front extends well beyond us, then sinks only to rise again and we come back together. Finally my love torments me and I am at the end of my rope, my love, this man sweet like the sound of the flute

I hear
I say
where are you
you where
you?

I pronounce you, I pronounce you condemned to life, you are my delirium, image after image.

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They turned on a hurricane's worth of alarms, they set in motion their dissection machinery, they set off mechanical, artificial, algebraic hysterics, but I resisted; they left no stone unturned, turned the building inside out, brandished guillotines with insatiable blades, pursued me, tracked me down to the basements, but, inert, I resisted; they told me I was full to the brim of manure, of ashes, of sewage, of polluted air, they showed me my manure, my sewage, and I turned away : "As if I didn't know, as if you could add to my dejection!" Quickly, they went back to their routine. They left me. Like that, out of lassitude: "When you've been gnawed away, you will implore us..." Calm: "They all end up imploring us." Persuaded that they would control me sooner or later "...so why not right away?" Cynical: "Nobody wins with us: winning is *our* job!" Let them win then and bury me! Walk all over me! Put me in a marble box! A nut box!

The hospital is a monstrous structure built by a revolutionary architect who erected these mountains of concrete, bronze and bricks on several hundred acres of land: sixty kilometers of corridors, hallways, vestibules, staff rooms, two to three hundred kilometers of neon tubes, five hundred kilometers of beds, as many tables, twice that in sheets, and three times that amount in tons of human flesh! And my howls of pain that can't be measured! They break through the barriers, break down the armored doors, they never dig a bed, instead split into streams, brooks, drops, forever wasted. From time to time someone comes too and catches them in a bedpan. She thinks she can call me to order through understanding. They understand! Perfect. They won't understand anything

anymore if I ask them for a few morphine injections and a bottle of booze. They strip me naked in front of a lecture hall full of idiotic students. Who scrutinize me, who get excited over my buboes, my wounds. There is a holiness I particularly despise, it is that of analysis. An old man mutters into a microphone: "Gentlemen, here are real wounds, this time they aren't illustrations. Take full advantage!" And they all adjust their glasses, sketch my buboes, fidget, fiddle furiously with themselves.

Ow! Ow! I stumble, the cliff is high, the rocks below, sharp...Ow!

"Come on, you need to eat a little! Don't be scared, it's cortisone! Drink! Don't worry, you won't feel a thing! Come on, let go, it's for your own good that we gave you this shot! Calm down! It won't take long! Pull up your gown, lie on your back! Does this hurt? How about here? Here? Higher up? Of course not, this is only a sleeping pill! Don't touch the bandage! We'll see tomorrow if your temperature has gone up! In a few days you'll be on your feet! You're in great shape! If you don't want to get well, all you have to do is keep this up and in a month they'll incinerate you! No, they aren't insects, they're electrodes! Can you feel my scalpel? Don't worry about a thing, the operation was a success, science performs miracles! You're not suffering, you're no longer suffering, you never suffered, you are suffering? Go on!"

Ow! I roll around on the ground and they continue to emit their verbose boasts, and I, calls and invectives, and they are the ones who show up...finally!

"Is it you who drank this vial of ether?!!"

"I sure did."

"You're completely out of your mind. Ok! Fine! I'm informing the Head immediately."

"Go ahead, let him know!"

But Stéphane is advancing. He turns the hospital into a pile of smoking ruins, of jumbled debris; and he doesn't spare anyone: "Please, no, I meant her no harm!" They bleat, they look for excuses, the progress of humanity, whatever, nonsense, and they leave it up to his magnanimity! "I'm pretty, let me live...(the little sadistic nurse). I'm useful, I have responsibilities! (the fat pig who calls himself a surgeon). I believe in God. I believe in your strength (the old dried-out nun). Please! At least spare the youngest!" They fall like flies, one on top of the other, and I stay in my wheelchair, my eyes downcast, interceding on no one's behalf. Stéphane douses them with gasoline. A match. One after another. They don't resist. They don't even protest, and some go so far as to off themselves in order to please, one last time, he who is greater than they. The others are thrown down a well: those who can, escape. I don't attack anyone, I don't hate anymore...that's all gone.

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With the hospital wiped out, I return trembling to Rohannes, near the weapons factory and I'm at the window, watching the avenue lined on both sides with wan streetlights; I examine the men because I'm afraid I won't recognize his gait.

At the "Bois-Charbon-Buvette", it's a costume-party, a dance, a screaming enclave in the midst of sleep. I was penetrated from every direction, crying and puking, pinned against the wall, the ground, the ceiling, and Stéphane arrived with his waterfall laugh: "You're a grande dame, you're a real woman!" and the men withdrew, made a circle around me, turned off the lamps all around me... Instead of saying: "I want to caress you", he said: "I'm going to kill you" and the tramps bowed, squatting, their foreheads touching the tiled floor, and Stéphane kissed my feet before dressing me in an immaculate sheet, and carrying me away, lifting me. Passed out, hirsute, perspiring in his arms. The staircase so long. "How much for a trick?" A light kiss. His lips two feathers on the blonde down of my cheek on the third floor, then another kiss on the upper floor, there he held his breath as if he were afraid his breath would wilt me, and an expression like an embarrassed kid. Yes, he carried me away, he climbed the stairs to where the stars rain down, he yielded beneath my weight and stiffened, entirely hard.

In all the dark corners of the cathedrals, in all the dark corners of the streets, there are two men waiting for me with a straight-jacket. In all the dark corners of the world, under the sea, underground, in the labyrinths, there are two men waiting for me with a straight-jacket. In your heart there is you, waiting for me with a straight-jacket: I see you, I follow your tracks, your odor, my wonder, everywhere, in the crypts, the caves, the vile dives where you get drunk. If you are dead, even for a long time, I open your casket and I lie on you, I smell you, I rub up against you, I want you to give me your mange, your syphilis, your malaria, your plague; I'll become a whore in order to carry it, to peddle it: maybe they'll also catch your beauty, your beauty is probably contagious...

At the "Bois-Charbon-Buvette" they move toward me, make me spread my arms and legs, crucify me, and the hail falls; they pour four bottles of red wine all over me, which colors me church purple. I'm crumpled, split, tripped. But he is aware of my royal birth, my royal blood, my royal solitude and sadness. "The people have always raped their queens. Queens are free whores." He tells them this through the inflexibility of his gaze, he also tells them that their mistake was to have neglected to kneel before raping me.

The staircase again. Once again his dazzling grace and, like a fire rising from a barn, like a clamor, he climbs: he'll make the door fly open, the walls too; he'll make me fly, glide, across Russias, Chinas, Indias, bestowing their crowns on me, tracing my silhouette on sky and sand. He will dazzle me again. I will have to wear a blindfold, but I will see him anyway; he will lay me down on the dunes, on flat stones! He'll take me in the middle of the street, in the middle of the dance-floor, in mid-flight...

Oh, bury me under your arm, ride a bird to get to the hole where I am falling apart! Save me from drowning and hanging, take me away from this hole teeming with reptiles, look I'm attacked by wolves, I'm tied to the torture post, gagged, garroted, in the

depths of sunless moats where even the dogs mate with me. Look at the strangled night!
Oh, bury me, forget me in your pocket, but get me out of my pit.

Tackle winter, break its neck, rip its carotid; cut the fences, tear my clothes, lay
me out in the sun, the time it takes for an uppercut.

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Mouth open. Idiot. Arms hanging at my side! Idiot! Chin up, crazy, in rags, eyes
bulging, I'm following my vision! Mouth open, blind, deaf, retard!

I leave home naked, I run through the streets, I gesticulate, I approach every man
his size, and they think I'm soliciting. Sometimes they take me with them, and rob me,
and make me submit to their gross habits, because it's too late, much too late, by the time
I realize they aren't the one I'm looking for. In the countryside, where I wander too, the
women throw stones at me; those who think I'm crazy, vomit barrels full of thunderous
laughter: "See her? Says a prostitute, she's The Passionate One, me I'm The Baroness!"

Where are you my mack, my skin, my light? Where?

"I'm walking around in the street..."

"But what street?"

"The one that goes to the canal"

"But why? Do you want to tie a rock to your neck and disappear?"

"I'm walking around in these streets, I'm strolling along the canal like before in
Rohannes."

"Look! Look! She's doing her Joan of Arc impression, she's hearing voices!" I
flee under a deluge of laughter! Terrified, I search everywhere. Where are you? Are you
hiding under my shadow? Are you wanted for murder? For fraud? I'm shouting. A cop
grabs my arm: "Come with me. Don't play the martyr. We've had it with your ruckus,
your racket! The noise is over, we're going to give you your mack alright, and what a
mack! Wearing a uniform, with stripes to boot! And a slammer, a nice slammer!" But the
captain won't hear of it "What the hell is this? She's not even a hooker, she's a sicko, an
idiot, a mongoloid, throw her back!

I enter the cafés that are lit up. "You haven't seen him? Don't lie! You saw him,
he comes here often." From fatigue I lean against the wall. I sleep on top of exhaust
grates so as not to interrupt my quest and, at dawn, the cold wakes me up.

Where are you my waterfall, my archangel, my sparkling silica, my incendiary
liquor? Where are you imprisoned, who put a ball and chain on your leg so you couldn't
come to me, in me? I ask things that are alive and things that aren't, I sniff around the
base of walls, I stare at the ground looking for his footprints or handprints because he
could very well have been walking on his hands; even in latrines, I know that the smell of
his urine could not be confused with anyone else's and I sniff, I turn around and I get lost
in the mist and smoke of factories, I prowls around the hangars, enter them, call timidly,

but I get caught; the man picks up a stone, throws it yelling: “Get out, road kill! Next time I’ll shoot!”

Where are you my summer morning? Tell me! Tell me! I’ll carry you back on my shoulders, I’ll drag you by your hair if I have to, if you have fainted I’ll revive you by slapping you, by caressing you, by biting you.

I search in buildings under construction, in buildings being demolished. I’ve searched in the rubble of the night, and the tune came back to me, on the rebound, the old chestnut: “Where are you my sulfur, my spring?” I called him in my sleep, in my masturbations, in my ballads, in my rambles, in my collapsed dreams. Pathetic idiot! In the stations, I monitored the trains, I waited in the ports, examined the arriving passengers, inspected their luggage, followed the taxis taking them to their hotels. Pathetic idiot, you’ll end up in the street, shouting, lifting your skirts in front of everyone, wetting yourself and eating out of garbage cans until they take you away before you contaminate the entire city with your filth. Who cares?! I look for you in the sewers, under piles of garbage, under merchandise displays, under piles of leaves in Autumn, under haystacks in Summer, in parks, in the wings of theaters, in catacombs, mass graves, dungeons. Sometimes, I get false leads: “Yes, I saw a man fitting the description you gave me. He went that way. I think he was staying at that hotel quite recently.” “Oh no! He isn’t here, he left for South America last week!” “Him, gone to South America? You must be kidding, he has breakfast here every morning...”

Where are you, my June evening, my thug, my ruby hornet? You are an entire musculature, you are an architecture, you’re the dancer, you’re the prone one.

No more refuge. Neither in the mountains, nor the plain, neither the sea nor the tomb. And the diseases, the nauseas attacked head on, with the frosts. “You know him, you’ve seen him, you know where he is, he used to come here every day.” At the “Bois-Charbon Buvette” I was told they didn’t know him and that I should be going if I didn’t want to be thrown out. I turned Rohannes inside-out. I took Paris apart. I wore myself to the bone, covering, haggard, metropolitan areas and back roads. I screamed, screamed, screamed, my throat lacerated:

Where are you my lightning
Where are you my stake removed from me
Where am I
I don’t know anything anymore
Where are you my voice
My killer
my birth

where are you my sky of clear skin, my tumultuous savannah, my torrent of molten precious metals? I am drunk from losing you, from following you, from whinnying in the city you can pulverize with a breath or a sigh.

Who counted my steps? Who erased my tracks? I retrace my steps ten times over without recognizing the stones I struck with my head on fire, the streets I followed, the squares where I fell, the esplanades where I rowed harder than a young galley slave, the dead ends where I scraped my elbows.

Amputated of him, I brandish my desperate stump toward the rain like a trapped bandit who dies swearing at the world, amputated of him, I vomit my death knell with the screams of the flayed alive, and my screams set the wheat fields on fire, parch the wadis.

My ramble has lasted longer than the polar winter! I have encountered shadows, silhouettes that I confused with walking gallows, all of them aiming surreptitious boreal looks at me, often accusatory or abject with pity. O my love, come put Rohannes to fire and sword, come remove the shot from my stomach and the wholesale ball of barbed wire from my mouth, see my fatigue, my bloody phlegm. The wind itself won't be able to caress you as well as I do; I'll open my arms and legs so wide you won't be able to avoid them even if you wanted to.

Love, get back on your boat, come back to this shore, come back, the period of migrations is over, come back, turbulent blade in my flesh. See my open arms and my bruised thighs. Love, get back on your boat. I am the sentry isolated in the night who peers over the parapet, alerted by your shiver. Where are you my arbor, my marine coolness? Get back on your boat, I'm waiting for you, for our infinite free voyage, on a boat with a forest of masts, I'm waiting for you alongside the abyssal plains, I'm waiting for you at the bottom of the sea, lying on a bed of algae, at the top of impassive mountains, in a field of asphodels.

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A man came out of a doorway, his collar was turned up and his hat pulled down. I let him take me by the hand without saying a word, without resisting, so indifferent was I, should he even have wanted to kill me. He said, with a snicker, "I know where he is, your man, let me take you to him." I knew he was lying, but I didn't feel like struggling. He led me to a house in the outskirts, near slag heaps where I hadn't looked for you yet. His body was full of soot and I didn't feel him on me or next to me, I didn't see him. Nor did I really see his house which was transparent, or his face, as though he had kept his collar turned up the whole time. Then I left, under the drizzle, at the hour the workers sleepily stagger to work on their bicycles, in the fathomless darkness, thinking that I didn't need to look for you around the slag heaps anymore, so I entered the mine. I wandered from gallery to gallery, without a light, feeling my way, stumbling, falling in the mud.

Other men tore my clothes, other men came out of the darkness; none of them spoke to me. Other men opened doors, other men came and went with the drafts; women too took me by the hand, but it was to take me to the hospital and I gave them the slip.

"Say, weren't you his friend? I've come a very long way to talk to you."

"I remember, yes, I seem to remember, it was several months ago, in any case: he was a man who spent most of his time in the colonies... Didn't he smoke hashish? Didn't he pick up a similar habit over there?" Each time I yell "Go on, please, tell me what you know..." "He left here in June. He said he would come back at the end of summer, I

think..." But the sky engages in huge cloud orgies and he didn't return, or else he doesn't hear me, and it's that I don't shout loudly enough, that my agony is mute.

I'm off again. "Walk, electrocuted one, move, electrocuted one, among the dismayed shacks where humans dwell, each discharge moves you closer to your love, forward and you will see the angel, the armed angel", said a voice perched well above the vain surrection of chimneys continually pissing their funereal ink. "Move forward, fear not the lapidations, fear not the abrasions, nor hunger and death, nor brambles and frost. Go forth, electrocuted one, eyes glued to your vision, beneath the monsoons, across the battlefields and the massacres. May nothing hold you back! May nothing divert you from your vision!" said the voice; and I feverishly scratched at the black ground, and my lover appeared in an old wall, or in the distance on the river, nonchalantly walking with his hands in his pockets while apartment buildings, fossilized monuments and temples, crumbled around him without being touched, downpours of water and stone. He is a star expanding at all hours of the day, he is the prince whose exile is crazier than his reign, he is the bird in flames you have seen pass by in front of your balconies, the necklace that suddenly strangles you: he seals my cracks and my fissures, scrapes the mildew off my lassitudes, with the concentrated jets of his superb cruelty. Where are you my star, where are you my sparkling blade? If you are cold I will send you letters that will burn in your fingers the more you read them. I will lie down on top of you. I will set the dry parts on fire. But I imagine you on a terrace, knocked out by the sun, with heavy limbs, dreaming about palm groves and water pipes...Do you know that I have slept near dying bums in dark town squares, do you know that I have drunk from the gutter, do you know that I have hugged the wet cobblestones ten times and that the north wind has slapped me and fucked me, do you know, O my simoon on the steppes, that I have wept with my head in vats of acid? Has anyone seen a longer scar? I will bring you the flowers that grow on my scars. I stretch the rope of my dream like a bow, I hold my dream by the hand like a kite, and I cast my words, my poor eunuchs, by the handful of bottles to the sea.

I make the rounds of the bars, I look to see if he isn't among the crowds exiting the movie theaters, I ask the djinns, the landladies, the cops. "Isn't that him, by any chance, the big guy drinking at the end of the bar?" "No." It's never him, it's always a man made of marble. I flail around like a marionette. People stand in a circle around me. I mimic death throes. I make a spectacle of myself so that he can locate me since I seem unable to find him, and so I can warm myself to the jeers of the passersby. A man in gray always comes to the fore, without brutality, takes me away and locks me up until dawn; he says to the night orderly : "Here she is again, the woman who only has one memory!"

I followed the canal, walked like an animal all the way to the locks, I cleared hedges, escaped from guard dogs, tasted the dew, only to go back to the city empty-handed with my bare feet bleeding. "Wasn't he a guy with brown hair? Didn't he take off on a boat filled with opium? Tea? Platinum bars? Rifles?" The doors slam. They chase me away and I come back, always more insolent, impudent, proud to ask my question. "If I ever have to see this whore again, watch out!" My love is my armor and my nudity. They take pot-shots and they never hit the target, they never put out my torch, never touch my rags. I can sing, I can let my madness run wild, because the universe yields to

my dream, no shackles can hold my dream. Memory is a staircase I climb with solemnity. Whore ascending to her throne of royal jade, and bellowing louder than the herds of feral animals: where are you my glory, my lightning, my geyser? (Here the mocking crowd is caught in the crackle of your gunfire and no one survives.)

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I am walking on a beach: your palm.

That night

Did you hear in June about the crazy woman of Rohannes, a lost little black town?

I sit on my throne of royal jade!

That night.

He took me on the towpath, near an abandoned barge, spilling its guts, a load of wet coal. Descend on me, my harrow! My hallucinogenic love turning the world upside down, making it explode into meteorite shreds, shifting it, eliminating it even at the slightest attempt to exert pressure on us. And my singing rose up to the front line when the seething factory on the opposite bank exploded into innumerable rumbles, low, high, muffled, pointing white beams of light at silver tanks or conduit and pipeline networks, while the steel spur of a killer's hand, as though wearing a silk glove, wrote at length in my skin, and drank there too. Night fell brutally on the factory and on me, in the sky a fleet of bombers passed by, trumpets sounded in the demented factory, the barge sank without uttering a word, your mouth whispered an order, a sob. And my singing rose up to the front line when we met like two cymbals. The factory continued to bellow, but it soon quieted: that's the time he strangles any throat other than mine: in me he fights to exterminate the one who is outside and who capsizes in the depths of my hands, I, firing squad victim tumbling down backwards from the top of a rocky ledge, immensely open and waving my arms, with that eagle on top of me, with that coral gaze on me, we, abandoned then on some island, on some boat without a coxswain, on some atoll where we struggle mightily, the waves crashing at our feet, wetting our feet, then washing over us, washing us tirelessly.

The rhythm changes and breaks apart a thousand times, Rohannes and the sea fade away, the image of Rohannes under the sea yields to that of our love, a schooner scuttled off a jagged coastline.

With his fingernail he made this mark, this smile on my neck, and tears and rains set sail to the North when he entered between my white legs, walking between them for a long time before his prick reached my cunt, my fire, that he beheld like a banner unfurled in the center of his vertigoes, floating in his nights for how many years... With a single stroke he sent me to the lands burned to ashes by him, with a single stroke my lament fell away: my wild lover envelops me with a caress like a jewel, he plows my field and I am the amorous earth. He is the sun I look at directly that rolls and prances on top of me, his

cock my spinal chord, the bridge over the abyss, the staff of which I am the flag, his cock the pick-axe digging into me at full tilt, extirpating my entrails so that my screams resonate in a large empty room, his blood stake hitting my chest, and through my summer storms, my kidneys, my shores of desolation. O let him carry me, fitted to him, nailed to him, upside down, let him spin me around this axis like a burning carnival piñata. Let him show his fists, hit me harder, take me away, remain above me as my firmament. Let him post himself, a citadel facing my distress, let me love even his vermin, beyond his vermin and mine, and let me carry the horror, all the horror riven to my body.

With a single stroke, my lament took to the sky and reached the nebulas, with a single beat of a wing, with a beat of a cock, O my stork both heavy and light, we took off in order to spin like my bellowing, and my bellowing fucked him up the ass in the air, and my skin spoke of him to the clouds, and I saw the continents fall away, I saw the ghosts of birds of prey invade palaces with thousands of columns, I saw us both, gondola still rising, inflated to bursting, chasing clouds of blue ether, and his balls become golden galleons, breaking the ground to navigate there, his balls dance on my hand, dance under my eyelids; finally I entered an ancient painted landscape, and he my eyes where there were two paths leading to an opaque jungle that he hacked at with rage; his slow movements to demolish the old growth married the undulations of his body, images and love reaching me in bursts, overwhelming me, ransacking my thought, my consciousness...

Anne, Anne lie down on the anvil! The soot, the coal in my mouth. See the wolf who prowls, who leaps. Sinks his gleaming incisors. Anne groans on the towpath. The wolf drains the groan. Anne splits in two. Whack! Tow the split body. Whack! Sparks fly from the anvil, shoot out of the black dust cloud. My lover, you are four horses. Whack! Turn the sky pale! Listen. She's falling from an invisible skyscraper. Strike, strike the tree again in its heart! My lover tears out my four limbs; tows my trunk in the melodious waters. The axe falls. Breath! Whack! Fall! Hips hot like a river of feathers. Hammer, hammer my invisible planet. Divert the towpath, juggle the metal tanks, the turrets, the cabins, the derricks: start erupting! The pack tightens the circle. Red shells, green rockets! Anne, is it your face! And its reflections, here, there, in the thick water? And multicolored fish that fly away with you? Pierce! Burst me like a bubble! Pierce, undermine, stab! My convict smashes my head like a cinderblock, breaks the mirrors. To his cock I am moored. We are a giant ball and spike game at the top of a glass tower of Babel. Kill me again, and again, bring me into the world and kill me! Red-hot coal on the towpath. My back. Whack! Booted beyond the atmospheres. Smashed. He'll display my little mug on the end of a pike. Ring! Ring! The yoked team falls into the ravine...his face a kaleidoscope...knight bedecked in beauty. Ring! Ring! The bells of the runaway team. Muddled like the water. Shower of scarlet petals, shower of my fire's petals. Whack! Whack! Knock and slam without let-up. And all the way to the hemorrhage of my "I love you." Swallow it, swallow the whole thing! Say my name! Blubber my name! Stéphane! Again! Stéphane! Jerk-off all my muscles. Down there the cities twinkle. Inside me his glans lighting up turns me into a lamp and I hammer his lead torso. He encloses our garden with his arms. Keep forging. Farther. Keep forging. Farther. Keep

shining, like this surgeon or this Cyclops who would have a headlight-eye on his forehead, an eye I find in different parts of his tensing body, and that will follow me everywhere later on, that will polish off my sleep forever. Leave with my hair, with my babbling like someone dead of thirst, with my reason, with my internal vegetation! Stalk and munch! Jerk me off until it's red! Watch out! Whack! Watch out, little girl! Bombings! Two craters, two holes in my breasts: "I'll fuck you there too." Little girl, don't eat the clay. Flee, flee! The fever is on the march. Crack! Crack! The branches. The fever is catching up to you. Whack! And burn! Whack! Tear your ribbons lengthwise. "Come, come, get into my slingshot. Slice through the bonds of my fever." He has the weight of a fortress and the implacable precision of a swordfish charging a frail canoe. He is also the graceful swell of the sea and the supple native climbing the palm trees; a sailor, he lets himself fall from the highest yard-arm and rams into me his stick that's bigger than a totem. Fever typhoon. Cut my throat to drink my saliva. Bomb, force! Sigh, O my stable. See Anne with the dislocated skeleton. Since forever, little girl, he has been lying in wait for you. Crack! Crack! Behind the branches. Taking the rap like a hanged man! Crack! And blocking the path in the position of an impassive guard... incisors gleaming... And Anne weaves the poem with eternally the same words, the same awful points of reference. *He* wipes his ass with the sky. *He* leads the brawl naked, miraculously naked. The daggers come out of the earth. He sprays me with light. I suckle his light, his dick, his magic wand: it needs to barely brush up against me and I become an Arab singer whose voice snakes through the djebels, a black singer at dawn, a singer of every color. Singer under the avalanche. He roars. Baroom! I am the reddish larches he knocks over. Baroom! On top of me, under me, all around. A red carpet of larches. Baroom! The one man band, the one man avalanche, the one man symphony, in the garland made by my arms, the streams of garlands and the eddies, the precious rags of my hair: witch beneath the odoriferous pyre, I absorb the incense emitted by his flesh, I gather it in my pores which are so many craters where the corpse of a child who resembles me is being burned to ashes. And the little corpses with eyes full of surprise are catapulted out of me one by one. Thus I expelled my own fetus and the fetus of my child to be (in the space of one second when my lover's eager knob had withdrawn) like a laughable champagne cork, leaving plenty of room for my lover and his banners, his dreaming legions. I lower the drawbridge for the barbarians. I throw the enemy the keys to the fortress. Forward! As a reward the chief offers me a luxurious bordello! I sabotage the dykes of my peaceful Holland. You have every right, we are no longer here. O my prince with the great gallop! Your mace into my poor cheap cuts. My shivers streak the evening with white filaments. You crush and harass me. But we are no longer here. Rohannes-Pompey! Rohannes, little stunted corpse! Crack! Crack! He has left the grove in order to flatten Rohannes. Showers of sweat! Prodigious toboggan! Bang! Bang! Right on target! Anne whoops it up! Unload! Unload a million volts of cum in me! Bang! Puppet sent flying! And whisper the epic in a word. He whispered love insults and these insults move me and make me a halo out of his most intimate secretions, vaporized and diaphanous, these insults sweeter than a page's bow, yes, they cover me, yes they are my devouring titles of nobility and the words of a

coronation mass, the Whore's coronation beneath the crimson dais, the Whore's coronation, standing before the altar, straight as a cypress, still isolated from you by the haughty organs, she walks over the organs a few meters from the stone slabs that cover the relics she disdains, that she won't even touch with her tippy toe. His insults guillotined me, one by one, limpid and cold drops on my clammy skin. Fall! Fall! My cutting blades: "My ass-fucked whore!" Oh, more tender than new shoots, than nostalgic Autumn, than precocious Spring; and "bitch" made a strange anemone blossom... "My Whore, My Whore!" A word that squirted deep within me while a Hiroshima of cum rose from us, that I saw getting lost, ingesting the night, lifting the night away, and while I twisted like a dying viper, curling, coiling around him, squirted in turn myself, (What ogre's kick sent me flying into the Milky Way?) and my momentum carrying him along with me, we ended up landing, dead leaves brought together and separated by a gust of wind.

We watched the atomic plume progressively dissipate, and mingled our breathing of busted machines, me always cuddled, coiffed, covered by him, and then he lay down next to me, to savor the angel-moment, the amalgam of elsewhere and in the past, before things would regain little by little, with great effort, the place imposed upon them, but it was no longer them, it was their copies, their remains, or their doubles, since my lover, my plow, had destroyed the originals, the appearances, making nature exhibit its underside. I stood up. He said "Hurry up, someone's here." I quickly straightened my dress. The noises were also resuscitating. But where were they coming from? What or who was making them? It seemed like we alone were palpable. We went towards the city, we walked like winded Buddhas, barely greeting the month of June with a smile, we retraced our steps along the canal, he pissed on the wall of a new house, he kissed me seven times and we spoke or stated what was dictated by our tired articulations and the lukewarm moon, the river of asphalt.

"What if we hang out until dawn?"

"What if we drink until dawn?"

"My love, let's invade China."

"You look like a daffodil."

"And you a blood orange."

"You're raving! Let's rave to the point of luxury, or even lust; yeah, let's seize Timbuktu right now!"

"Let's break into our own place!"

"The broad is still baroque!"

Then he whistled, I don't know for how long, simple ditties, old fashioned tunes. That night...his palm...I remember, not far from a barge. My face is still covered with coal. Strong, acidic like blood orange.

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Farewell the jetty and the open sea, I'm going back to my haunted holler, the hole where it seemed, at birth already, that I was the toadstool; farewell my beds as big as countries, farewell my coats of arms, my ball gown; I'm adrift once again in my widowed cities without dawn or twilight. The ball came to a sudden stop, petrified. A violin caught up in the momentum of its playing, continues, then freezes, is silenced. The dancers remain on one foot, turned into statues. Is it death finally that dresses me in lace? "You see, this dope makes you right before you even have a chance to say 'phew'!-Watch out old bag! Watch the cars!" It's the city that's doing the talking and the streets that menace: "They'll sew up your cunt, eat up your tits, saw off your legs!-Yuck!! The crackpot who begs and stinks and gives us her syphillis, her mange, her excema!" It's like I send them my contagion by blowing on a dandelion. "I'll mark her with my shank, for sure! -Ew! Ew! The crackpot outfitted in rags all full of lice and spells! - To the gallows old bag, to the gallows!-let me inject her with this!- Watch out, watch out, don't touch her or speak to her, she's poisonous..." Farewell my deposits of amethysts and smiles, I am going to meet my lame destiny, farewell my deposits of topaz and music, my libations, my offerings, I am only left with my mutilations for company, farewell the fragrance of woodland paths, the fairy is senile, plumb out of metamorphoses, she stutters her magic formulas, makes mistakes and wanders, fallen, scratching her eczema patches: farewell accursed fairy. She is discovered one day falling asleep on Terminal street, her cheek resting on a sheet of butcher paper, and the miracle didn't happen that would have changed the paper into a piece of fine linen.

Still the same flux carries me from the higher town to the lower town, or toward the slag heaps, the slums, among the faces indifferent to my hoarse voice, the executioners and the walls it bounces off of; my song wounds my lips, rots my lips, and I tear out my fingernails, saying : " He loves me...a little...a lot" which ends, as you know, by "madly." Oh, drunken housekeeper, in the odors of the day and of frying food, pining for a vagabond with the habits of a fawn. At four o'clock in the morning I caught a glimpse of him in the company of an Englishman dressed to the nines, who said, when I asked directions : " I did, I saw your friend at the gaming club, win my cousin Lord Syllingham's fortune and put the Giralda of Granada on the zero of the roulette wheel..." At five o'clock, he was close by, so close, perched on a branch of that tree over there, like a druid, but an old woman squawked when she recognized me: "What is sanitation up to!? They aren't going to leave that in the middle of the street !" At five he was very close and at six the Englishman was finishing his tuxedo and his whiskey flask while I was on mount Palatine sending semaphore signals in every direction: "Come rescue me, my shark, where are you?" From impotence my feet struck the ground and my fists the locked doors; at dawn my semaphore ran out, exhausted by the useless beating of its wings and I wondered if he wasn't in a prison courtyard, about to be put to death, or whether the first morning train would bring him to me, wearing the victor's toga, escorted by at least ten servants and coming straight toward me on brocade, my God, straight to my waiting room, my waiting street, my rebellious highlands. And the Harlequins greeting the sunrise by dancing around: "We know him" they said "We met him a few

days ago.” They showed me where he had slept in the town park: “He was headed West when he left...” They disappeared quickly, too quickly.

An orchid blooms at sunset; a quarrel under a portico divides two friends; workers stream out of the factory, their skin a shade of green; as do demolition men wearing grey suits; unfinished images shoot through my body, fast, too fast; frail hopes and your bass and rounded voice, never distorted by the barks of dogs, the brandishers of placards, the raisers of fists: “My darling, my friend, stop a car, a carriage, and hurry.” Cyclists fallen asleep crash at the bottom of the hill into the post-office wall; passersby congested with hatred and engorged with erotic dreams push their sweat toward familiar cemeteries; children mimic the dying in barricaded palaces and I take off in search of my lord. “My pockets are full of nuggets and brooches, hurry up!”

I will go without shoes or hat, without worrying about December, forgetting the red city where I defenestrated myself so many times from the pain.

The streetlights of the residential neighborhood engage in an obscene belly dance and a cockroach the size of a tramway scarfs up the inhabitants; everything is syrupy and viscous despite the snow, from the pulpit, merchants selling nothing make their sales pitch to the faithful, a ragpicker sleeps off his wine in his cart, negroes roll around in the middle of the street begging for mercy, mercy from the speeding cars, from the girls who lift their skirts to walk in the black mud, from adolescents who cough and stuff themselves with mud, from old men who still caress, through their mended pant pockets their dried-out and soft penises, mercy from prison guards holding whips, from Christs nailed head down to apartment building and barn doors, and hands squeeze necks, anxious hands shake, bronze gazes look for an impossible exit, Rohannes, prisoner of a sticky tentacle, is shaken by spasms, and works, hands, souls, testicles sweating their nothingness, and I take off in search of my lord.

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In this village that he frightened by putting on the airs of a fakir, old women and children pointed him out. In this other one he sowed the rye, irrigated the scrub, picked the vegetables, and harvested the grapes. Farther on, I hear him talked about as an untouchable, impenetrable mikado, who is supposed to have reserved a room in a luxury hotel for one night. He had the moon as a monocle and no luggage. Farther still, distrustful peasants tried to kill him with pitchforks; in a stream he laid traps, bathed, dried off on the bank, and seeing him so beautiful, the washerwomen stopped rinsing their laundry and, chirping, stood up, leaning again as though they did not want to see, caryatids suddenly surrounded by a farandole of crazed fauns, bent over by the weight of the erect poem. I know every location he chose to rest, every pond where he dipped his face. He avoided such and such a group of farms access to which was barred by mastiffs, he snuck in at night like a fox into hen houses to break the necks of badly

guarded chickens, but my suffering pursues an uncatchable trade wind, a Tamerlane, the only visible aspect of which are the roofs torn away, the damage after his passage. I let myself fall on a bale of hay that has kept the shape of his body, a shape that for a moment I thought was on top of me. And it burned me. I hit the road again! “Anne, Anne, he is in the little wood,” said the oak, “he is in that farm shed, in front of you .”

I fight wild hogs for potato peels, I too thread my way through henhouses, my stomach clenched from hunger, and I call you from the hilltops, from the steeples. The road is long. It leads to my grail under fiery skies, vehement dreams of nettles or hyacinths, to the rhythm of my step, which is a loving, regular, almost joyful rhythm. My love, the shepherd returning home for the winter Angelus, the kid in clogs playing in a puddle, the suspicious patrolman, the women chatting in front of the church, the horse thief, all have watched you leap over walls or run through the brush; the flowers too remember you and try to imitate your odor.

Poplar or plane tree, what does it matter which one extends a branch at the end of which I can swing, if I don't find you, bay of shadows or bathtub, any water attracts me where I will make my last bubbles if I am not able to at least brush up against you. Everything has seen your sandal tread upon the golden lichens that spread beneath it a silent carpet, and I go, I whip my soul, I whip the fog, my towers surveil the vales, my ships plumb the wells, my greyhounds track you in the plowed fields, my henchmen question the peasants. A harp player sings your story in my tower, a rose finds its way into my sleep, softening my mourning with a glimmer of you, one by one, I remove the pins from my skin in order to set out again, and you, mad priest, you place a poisoned host on my tongue. In the morning the muffled countryside passes by under my suffering heel: its solemn immobility is undisturbed, funerary shroud of my sorrow. The cold, the frostbite, the wet rags melt when I spell your name, and the letters that fall on the frozen path create a flowerbed of summer heat-waves.

Countryside in an aquarium, barely disturbed by a bird, airborne marshes, underground passages inhabited by monsters without shadow. Empty hearth. Damp alcove.

And when I lie in wait for you, crouching an entire day in the reeds of a pond you were supposed to cross, when I was on display all day in a shop window so that, should you walk down this street, you would see me, when I visited the morgues, trying to recognize you among the thousands who died recently in wars, accidents, earthquakes, tell me, did you sometimes find out about it as you retraced your steps?

The hare's stupor to find itself face to face with me, the croaking of frogs, the harder road, the slippery slope, the old man muttering into his mustache, the night gets the better of them as it does of me, whimpering, on the ground, claws out over my loss.

I have eaten green apples and asked animals for shelter. A peasant's pick-up truck dropped me off near a dull town while a gray-green dawn broke, a worker ensconced in a leather jacket invited me to drink and dine before I left this town, then the countryside buzzing with insects, decompositions and saps opened its cemetery of mists and boundaries piled up in my memory, without reality, well, from the pale meadows the mist arose and I stretched out on the soft earth, still calling you, still crying, which you

answered with a brief ray of sunlight, a sliver of bright light that reminded me of your possible presence and made me get back up and go towards...

See, near the signal box, he jumped into a freight car, on the bogie to be exact, and the train took him to the other end of Siberia! Here he passed by with an iridescent rooster under his arm, snatched from a nearby barnyard. On the fresh cement of this house you can read the list of the cities he knew ; he was drinking and laughing in this inn only an hour ago, and he rested his cheek on the marble of the table in the back, over there, near the fire-place, probably in order to dry off his pants. Here is the cell that held him and also the oats where he cavorted like a billy goat, like a zebra. Among the oats he caught his breath in order to dash off, wearing his seven leagues boots, and, who knows, fly to my rescue.

Here is the embankment I embraced, greasy and ochre under a slimy sky, alongside the shimmering highway. I was waltzing and I fainted in your arms, in full sway, rocked by the sea, listened to at your mouth (Oh, your breathing which swings a troupe of galloping riders) and by the chords of the nocturne which lessened the weight of my head, pressing on the embankment....

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Oh my wedding, shipwreck of my oceanic wedding at my awakening! Time to stand up again and recognize, astonished, the impact of the fall, and hammer the countryside with my new dreams, with my miserable masturbations sown here and there on the weeds and the embankments, like war does with its forgotten dead. But will you emerge from this, moving and upright, O my emperor? From the meadow spread out to my right or from the pile of fertilizer to my left? If there needs to be lots of garbage for a flower to grow, at least won't you be born from my corpse, from the corpse of my prayers? I am at the mercy of of an acorn falling from this oak, at the mercy of a sleep that does not want to end, of a vigorous little breeze carrying razor blades. So the world comes down to this embankment, to the smoky departmental road that leads nowhere! By dint of taking my index finger to my vulva, wisteria from which swirling memories escape, I have wrung myself dry: I'm breaking my back reconstituting a masterpiece, I'm bungling it like the class dunce, I'll be escorted to my prison cell.

A cart picked me up; we bounced around in the middle of sad polders and lagoons. My driver, like me, was bound nowhere. We hardly conversed and went our separate ways at Le Creusot. I remember the filly, looking sinister behind her blinders like a sister of sickness.

Beltways, industrial neighborhoods, commercial centers, ports, ports where one can dig up a dive you frequent and the harbor where you threw all your clothes over the railing of a rusting cargo ship belonging to a certain outlaw company active in the Red

sea and not mentioned in the Registers! The docks, the wharves with their beams, cranes, winches, pulleys, I have surveyed them, inventoried them from top to bottom, neglecting nothing.

Wailing for you in an ancient alleyway in Paris, Saint-Etienne or Le Creusot, I am approached by a varicose negress and we two hang out for a long time, she confiding in me in a hoarse voice and giving me bread, I, grateful, listening to her around four in the morning, holding forth, singing for cigarette butts her poignant and soiled serenade:

*“Oh, Lord this road has no end
and nobody takes your hand...”*

tragic and childlike in front of a lanky black man named Joe Snake. “Your guy came to the club one night, and believe me, that’s where you’ll find him, I know my men!” I’m not counting on it anymore so much and what matters is that it be warm and nice at Joe Snake’s place, and that I can crash for an hour or two, the time needed for the invention of incredible adventures during which my lover splashes me with nuggets, cavorts among the ferns after making love, leans over me more tenderly than a willow, oh and finishes it off by setting me on fire between his granite knees.

One day, I wailed for you, my blond lightning, my red lightning, my dark lightning, in an alleyway of my last port of call, at Joe Snake’s place, facing an obese Arab, on the road that distilled my desire, in cramped rooms where I scratched the wallpaper, and may your ultimate salvo destroy fear, this bat gripping my hair, creeping under my dress, entering me, and knock me off my chair, off my table stained with fly droppings. “Oh, Lolly, if I leave Le Creusot, where will I meet a friend like you...” She strikes up her blues, then grumbles: “Don’t leave before Spring little lady, Lolly forbids you to leave when it’s cold outside.”

We browse around this bazar that is the city and the people seem atrociously old and lame. We feed at the same bottle of sorrow and confusion, chattering and sobbing...I don’t always understand what my negress says, but her good-natured air inflected with bitterness, her matronly breasts, reassure me, are enough for me. I continue my research using the same absurd method that consists in tracking down porters, railroad, postal, airport and hotel employees, landlords, who knows, passers by, and bothering them with my worried question, quickly, because they are only thinking of how to get away from me, such is their embarrassment at being seen in the company of a crusty tramp.

Crossroads of my purgatory; I can’t trick myself anymore, my instinct of self preservation is gone: the drowned one returns to the sea; the lost one to the mountains; I to my carriages, my escapes. I won’t run after you anymore, I won’t apostrophize anyone anymore. I will stay put, sit down, and fashion Odysseys you accomplished, as in the sleep of a opium addict:

“This evening, on the stern you are humming a tune once played by a crazy clarinet, you splash in the wind, you wink at the porpoises that frolic near the ship’s bow, and you laugh, candidly casting your laughter to the wind. Tomorrow you will beat the captain in single combat, but, in the meantime, you are going to swing in your hammock, down in

the wave battered hull. You are docking in Algiers. I see you up there on the bridge, carrying a meagre duffel. Then in the Casbah, you sell some fabric to a poor devil, you get involved in a fight, you enter a house, a sheik hosts you on soft red cushions and invites you to smoke from a water pipe. You leave by the rooftops, stride over the streets...Sometimes you see me, watch me for a moment, and take off again on your ramble. I won't pursue you much longer, have no fear."

Rohannes' sidewalks are darker than others, narrower especially. No one goes for a walk there. People just hurry, from point a to point b. Even in the summer there isn't a single person strolling on the street on Sunday. It is a place where a state of siege, a ten o'clock curfew, and morning anxiety have always existed. There is the national highway, but I have never seen a car stop in our town. For quite a long time the inhabitants have adjusted to, been molded by, the abasement of gain: they say that this is the form of self contempt that suits them best. They don't say anything. They are content to adorn their souls with advertising posters and they have no secrets from one another. Tiny passions are able to turn them into criminals. I saw an old man murder a concierge by striking her once with his cane because she had forgotten to deliver his letter. It may be the same with me and my passion which dances on points on his island.

My God, here are my sins, they are babies with stunted limbs, please acknowledge that there is nothing to add to my sorrow, my resignation already hurts a great deal.

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The duty nurse straightened my pillows. A plastic carnation is stuck in her bun, she never replaces it. On the wall that separates me from another rotten bitch, I have set up my screen: my lover is resting there among the lilacs, protected by an impregnable redoubt. What has he heard of my mutterings? Did he take them, as I have, for words of love? Or was I seduced by death and was I only talking about that, attributing to it radiant body and laughter; that doesn't cure anything: your body was soul in me, and mine remains flesh and tumors.

The nurse will remove the artificial carnation from her bun and will put it in the glass of spring water on the night table, the doctor will open the frosted glass door and will inquire, as he does every morning, about my condition ("Well now, how is our impenitent one doing?"), and, without surprise, will pull up the sheet, my roommate, who has been around, said she expected as much. I know all of this by heart, it's no big deal. No bigger than a hiccup. What matters are the marvelous horses and carriage, the sumptuous outfit in which she arrived. Oh, my God, I will croak like a female, with my legs spread.

Love and Death, the one sailing on the other, painting a violent seascape.
When I was a girl I read novels and silly melodramas that ended by “love and death, love,
death, love is death”¹

Hôpital Percy --- Avèze 1965

¹ Translator’s note: “L’amour et la mort, l’amour, la mort, l’amour est la mort.”