

I GOUDOUGOUDOU

I take a plane. Destination Port-au-Prince. I remember it every time I travel to Haiti. It was January 12, 2010. Landing in the afternoon, I was soothed by the melody of the small orchestra playing “Ayiti cheri” at Toussaint Louverture Airport. On the road, I took in the landscapes, colours, sun, turning my back on winter. Arriving at the hotel, I dropped off my bags in my room. Then met my friend Dany Laferrière at a restaurant. We barely had time to order, coarse salt fish for me and lobster for Dany. Suddenly, an insane noise rose up from the earth. A hellish, thundering noise. A voodoo *loray kale* noise. A noise that pounds the tam-tams. Darkness prevailed. I didn’t know what was happening. I didn’t see anything. No one knew anything. Everyone hit the ground. The concrete of the courtyard opened as though to swallow us up. The trees gave way. The houses too. Dust covered the sky. The radio stations kept repeating the word *earthquake*. A dizzying tragedy. A cacophony of hardship. The dogs didn’t bark. The experts assessed the damage. They counted the dead. 300 000.

*Dance of the dead. Playing dead. As though
the dead were more alive than the living.*

– Rodney Saint-Éloi (Translated by Oana Avasilichioaei)