

II Bill Clinton

A magnitude 7.3 earthquake. Bill Clinton asks for donations: “Send even one or two dollars.” Préval, the country’s president, cries, powerless. Clinton takes the lead through his foundation. He says reconstruction. He repeats it and everyone repeats it after him: *Country open for business*. The marines land. Striped flags flutter all over the country. They call it *humanitarian aid*. NGOs mushroom on the sidewalks. They call it *co-operation*. They. Buried their dead. They. The people of the small nation of sunless days don’t say a word. They. Stay silent. Don’t have time to cry or point a finger at tragedy. Desperate times call for desperate times. No voices to soothe the tremors. Their houses vanish in the clouds. Their dreams collapse with the ground. The only word that escapes their mouths is GOUDOUGOUDOU. Clinton pontificates, promises, and legislates. He ends up repackaging the dough. Billions, they say, in the backrooms. Ten years later, no one knows where the money went. The people of the small nation pray, beg the sky for mercy. The others bust a gut. Bill busts the TV.

Captain, the wreck calls out to you. Do you have any last words?

III

The poor bury their dreams in their hearts like dogs. *Rév chen rete nan ké chyen*. They don’t ask, how are you? Has the season kept its promises? The poor are afraid that you’ll steal their questions. Say no when it’s yes. Yes when it’s no. Neither yes or no, but... Because there’s something profoundly irreparable in words. Tragedy should protect itself from tragedy. The poor are afraid of words. They become runaways. They invented the word runaway. The poor are rocks that obey the sun and rain. The rocks roll and vanish TOUP TOUP in the river. GOUDOUGOUDOU. The body resists without resisting. Body turned to stone. Body that says absence. The absence of all absence. Here, things have no name. The body is blind.

I have a memory for forgetting.

– Rodney Saint-Éloi (Translated by Oana Avasilichioaei)