

periodics

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A Magazine Devoted to Prose

Paul de Barros & Daphne Marlatt

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A TRIP TO THE VOODOO DOCTOR

After a week and a half of anxiously waiting, Kathy decides to go to Port-au-Prince to look for Roger. As soon as she reaches Port-au-Prince, she forgets about Roger. Completely dazed, with a huge smile, she wanders around the hot docks that are the pits of Haiti's main city.

The congested streets rotting pastel-colored wood walls piled on top of each other, legless and armless beggars on wheels, male and female one-basket merchants, rows of food and leather and plastic shoes and notebooks and hair curlers, one or two scared white tourists, starved children looking for the rich white tourists, non-existent sidewalks and cars, lots and lots of cars, Chevrolets and Pontiacs and Plymouths and Fords and VW's and jeeps and a few American sportscars and the trap-traps, cars of every color and year, cars that don't run and hopped-up cars, all going at the same speed: slowly, and lots and lots of garbage, and rooms without doors in the rotting pastel-colored wood walls, and rooms without walls, everything and everyone piled up on and squashed next to each other, a big pounding scaly pregnant fish: all give way to wide empty streets. Wide empty sidewalks. Low block-big rectangular buildings. Everything here is white. It's hotter than where the people and all the buildings are crushed together. There seem to be very few people here because the sidewalks and the streets are so huge. The air seems to be the same color as the buildings and the streets.

Moving from the congested market-slum-city, through this whiteness, to the ocean, each block gets longer and wider. The third and final block is the longest and widest. It's huge. It's surrounded by emptiness. The few people walking up and down look like black marbles lost in the sand. A white person wouldn't be seen at all. Moving from the congested market-slum-city, through this whiteness, to the ocean, the air and the buildings and the streets get hotter. It's so hot by the ocean, no one can breathe. The ocean is a green plate. There's no sounds because the streets and buildings are big and empty and almost invisible. As if they're shadows.

What are they shadows of? One narrow wood pier extends into the water. The water makes no sound against the wood. A two-sail boat lies a quarter of a mile off of this pier.

It's this hot and white because dust and pollution sweep down from the mountains and the upper city into this pit. Then the air and pollution move from this pit across the ocean and leave a vacuum.

One wide black street lies parallel to the ocean front. Three huge empty squares, amputated fingers, lie off of this street. The cement squares don't contain anything.

A group of males are standing on the corner of the sidewalk of the middle square. They're talking to each other. Two cops in cop uniforms're yelling at a smaller group of men, a few whites in this group, who're trying to get past the closed wire gates and on to the far end of the pier. Kathy walks out of the middle of the smaller group of men and off of the pier. She's leaning against a pole and watching what's going on. The world's hot.

"Hey, Kathy."

She looks around, but doesn't see anyone she knows. She doesn't know anyone in Port-au-Prince.

"Hey, Kathy."

She looks over the street at the large group of men on the sidewalk and sees an arm waving. She crosses the black street and walks over to the waving arm. "Don't you remember me, Kathy? I'm Sammy's brother. Don't you remember Sammy?"

"Jesus Christ. How are you? I've been away: I just got back to Port-au-Prince yesterday. How's Sammy?" She feels embarrassed.

"Sammy wants to see you."

"I don't know. Uh, I'm kind of busy right now. Actually I'm looking for Rue DeForestre. I've got to make an airplane reservation so I can get back to the Cap as soon as possible. Can you tell me where the Rue DeForestre is?"

"When should I tell Sammy to meet you?"

"I don't know. Sometime later today. I have to get to the Rue DeForestre and I got totally lost . . ."

"It's just a few blocks from here."

"Where?"

"You can't walk there by yourself. I'll get someone to help you."

"I don't need any help. I just want to know where it is."

"Patrick, this is Kathy. Kathy, Patrick." A short-hair goodlooking twenty-year old.

"How can I get to Rue DeForestre?" she asks Patrick.

“I’ll show you. It’s not far from here.”

“Just tell me how to get there.”

“You can’t walk there by yourself. It’s too far.”

“I like to walk.”

“White women don’t walk around this city by themselves. The men won’t leave you alone and you’ll get lost.”

“I can take care of myself. I just want to know how to get there.”

“Do you not want to walk with me because you think I’ll do something bad to you?”

“Don’t be ridiculous. I just don’t see any reason you should go out of your way so I can get to where I’m going. I like you.”

“I have nothing to do. I’ll walk with you.”

“I can’t pay you or anything.”

“Why do you mention money? I want to be your friend. Do you think I want your money?”

“I’m sorry.” She tries to explain. “I get so used to people asking me for money, I . . .”

“You don’t want to be friends with me?”

“I don’t even know you. I think I want to be friends with you.”

“What hotel’re you staying at?” the brother asks her.

“The Plaza.”

“Sammy’ll pick you up there at 5:00 this afternoon. Don’t forget.”

“O.K.” She turns again to her new friend. “I have to go to ABC Tours. It’s on the Rue DeForestre.”

“I know where it is.”

They start walking upward, through the city. “Is it far?”

“Why do you ask so many questions?”

“I just want to know where I’m going.”

“Why do you want to get to ABC Tours so badly?”

“I want to get back to Cap Haitian as soon as possible.” She tells him how much she loves Cap Haitian, all about Roger and the beggar boys. “Are we almost there?”

“What’re you in such a hurry for? Americans’re always in a hurry. I lived in America for a while, that’s why I speak English so well, I didn’t like it except when I lived in Atlanta, Georgia. The life in Atlanta, Georgia is like the life here. Nobody hurries here, no one works, and there’s

lots of dope. Do you smoke dope?"

"Yeah."

"Do you want some now? I have some really good smoke. I can stop by my house and get it."

"Not right now. Maybe later."

"Don't you trust me?"

"I trust you. I mean, you're a strange guy and I don't know you very well."

"I don't want to hurt you. Do you think I want you to be my girlfriend?"

"Well . . ."

"Look. Put your hand in mine." She stares at his outstretched hand. "Go on. Take my hand." She's holding his hand. "See. I don't want anything more. Do you know why you can trust me?"

"Why?" Her big brown eyes look up at him.

"You look and act exactly like my older sister. How old are you?"

"Twenty-nine."

"No you're not. She's twenty-three."

"I AM twenty-nine."

"You can't be more than twenty. That's how old you are. Call me your brother."

"O.K., brother."

"Take my hand again." He takes her into the green rickety wood room that's the travel bureau and out of it. "Why do you want to take a plane to the Cap?"

"How else could I get there?" They continue walking up and down the sometimes non-existent sidewalks past the fake storefronts.

"Why don't you rent a motorcycle?"

"Gee, that's an idea. When I was a kid, I used to spend days hitchhiking on motorcycles. I've always had this thing about motorcycles and black leather. But if I drive a cycle up to the Cap, I won't have any way of getting it back. Maybe I can return it there? I could learn to ride a cycle in a day."

"I'll ride with you. Then I'll drive the bike back to Port-au-Prince."

"How much money would you want for that?"

"I don't want your money. I told you this already. I do it because you're my sister."

"No. I don't think I want to do it. How much would it cost me to rent a cycle?"

"Nine dollars a day."

“That’s not much.”

“Plus you give them a deposit. You get the deposit back.”

“How can I get the deposit if I’m going to Cap Haitian and not coming back?”

“I can get it for you.”

“No . . .”

“You still don’t like me. You think I’m going to take all your money.”

“I don’t have enough money for you to take.”

“If you rented a motorcycle, you could be in Cap Haitian tonight. You don’t want to waste all your money on a plane. Why don’t you take a look at the motorcycle store? It’s just around the corner.”

“Wait a second. If it costs me nine dollars a day I won’t be able to get the cycle back till tomorrow, it’ll cost me at least eighteen.” She’s adding everything up in her head. “Plus the deposit. That’s more than a plane ticket.”

“So you’re not going to do it?”

“I have my plane ticket. I’m going to go back to the hotel now.”

“Why don’t you rent a bike just for the day? You can take the plane tomorrow or the next day. Well go to the Barbancourt rum factory.”

“I don’t have nine dollars to blow on a cycle. I want to go home.”

Patrick informs her there are other cheaper ways to go to Cap Haitian, the vomit bus and the government airplane, so she asks him about the government airplane. They decide he’ll take her to the government airport so she can reserve a ticket.

They’ve been walking up and down the sidewalks for hours. Sometimes there’s a huge bottomless hole in a sidewalk. Sometimes a sidewalk disappears. Sometimes the sidewalks and streets are clean, the wood store walls are solid. As they descend through the city, the sidewalks getting narrower until they almost disappear, the streets disappearing, the stores are on top of each other. They’re in the marketplace. The sidewalks lie under shoes, carved fake mahogany cause there’s no real mahogany left in Haiti cause the woods that used to cover the island have been decimated, straw baskets full of plastic barrettes, Ivory soap, and underpants, mangoes, baskets full of all kinds of burnt sugar confections, dried fish. The long cigar black street lies under brightly colored private cars, private taxis, city-run taxis, trap-traps, bicycles, young boys with no legs, young boys with shrivelled legs, and old big-belly women. One huge block contains one no-door building.

Inside this building, space is immense. There are no walls except for the outer walls of the building and those walls are almost invisible due to the lack of light. Tables cover all of the sawdust floor, tables far as the eye can see, wood tables covered with baskets full of short and long rices, millet, wheat kernels, ground grains, dried corn and white and yellow corn flours, dried fishes, fish freshly caught from the ocean still unscaled and ungutted, different varieties of mangoes, canaps, figas, bananas, breadfruit, sour oranges, lemons, limes, onions and garlies, tomatoes, coconuts, cashews, roasted cashews, sugar, brown sugar, almonds, peanuts, raisins, Camembert cheese, more. Scales hang over some of the tables. Narrow pathways in the darkness separate the tables. Women and men and children all dressed in brightly colored cloth, almost hidden by the darkness, stand by the tables or shuffle by each other. Almost under the table, in the half-light, here and there, an old woman squats and separates kernels of corn in a huge straw basket and scales a fish with a big heavy steel knife in her hand. Outside the people are walking on top of each other, over each other; the sky's so bright its yellow is blue even though it isn't.

Kathy and Patrick stumble into a trap-trap. A trap-trap is a small public bus that's colored with green red pink yellow brown blue and black paint. The trap-trap's white. Virgin Mary's La Sirene's Jesus Christ's Duvalier's private girlfriends' names adorn every inch of the bus' walls. GRACE DE MARIE. PAIX POUR TOUJOURS. LE SAUVEUR EST ICI. The trap-trap lets Patrick and Kathy off at the government air-base.

The government air-base is a huge almost empty field that's brown gray and, a little, olive green. A brown man stands in a gray metal booth in front of this field and controls who goes in and out of the field. There are a few other men inside the field. There are a few two-engine gray airplanes. There are a few huts on the ground. The air field seems empty cause it's so big and cause it looks like death.

She walks out of the air field and they climb back into a trap-trap. She thanks him and tells him she's going to go home now that she's done what she had to. He doesn't want her to go away from him. He tells her he wants to go to the beach. She doesn't want to go to the beach. He wants to rent a motorcycle and ride around Petionville. She doesn't want to rent a motorcycle. He wants to go dancing in Carrefour. She doesn't want to dance.

"I know this doctor I'd like you to meet."

"Do you mean a voodoo doctor?"

"He's a very important man. I want you to meet him because you mean a lot to me."

“I’d love to meet him.”

“You have to realize this could be the most important thing that’s ever happened to you.

I want you to realize this. This man can change your life.”

“I want to meet him.”

“He’s going to do a lot for you. I know he is. This man has helped a lot of people. He’s a very good man.”

“I don’t want him to do anything for me. I just want to meet him.”

“There’s just one thing. You have to be willing to realize who he is.”

“Do I have to pay him anything?”

“You’ll have to buy him candles so he can do his work. That won’t cost you much.”

All the trap-traps in the city meet in the marketplace. They’re back where they started from. Limbless beggars crouch under them. Skateboards attached to half-bodied-people roll by.

They go off to see the voodoo doctor. The city cab soon leaves the straight black tar streets. It winds basically upward and to the left, sometimes round in circles, sometimes in huge snake-arcs, sometimes it goes opposite to where it wants to go, there’s no time in Haiti. It goes everywhere. Through driveways and around falling-apart single building single-room stores. On gray (broken) cement roads that go under while the old mansions alongside the road go up so it seems to go under the mansions. Ahead up a narrow street hedged in by two-story wood houses into a narrow grey wood garage then back down the street in reverse.

The neighborhood changes completely. The taxi-cab turns left on a corner, and stops.

A narrower pebbly unrideable road juts off of the dirt road the taxi’s been riding on. The new road is covered with dust. Thick yellow dust. This dust hides women carrying huge parcels on their heads, walking in the ruts, and two-story stucco houses, painted all colors, yellow and black. They walk into the dust. The sun seems to get hotter and hotter. There’s lots of noise and hot dust and heat. On one side the dust sharply descends through the air into a ditch crossed over by a modern trestle. They keep on trudging upward.

The pebbly road turns sharply to the right. About ten yards below this turn, there’s a dark red stucco house. The red house has a porch.

The sun is very hot. Kathy feels tired and excited. Kathy should wait on the porch while Patrick sees if the doctor’s available.

Kathy’s waiting. A huge man appears. Would Kathy like to go inside?

Kathy does what anyone tells her. She follows the man around the porch and the house past a tiny woman washing and hanging laundry to a tiny room in the back of the house which is only big enough for the narrow cot and cabinet-desk inside it. Photos and newspapers cover the walls and glass windows of the cabinet.

“Are you the doctor?” Kathy asks the man.

“The doctor?”

“Uh, I’m supposed to meet a doctor. A holy person. I thought that was you.”

The huge man sits down on the bed next to Kathy and laughs. “Non.” The huge man speaks only French. “I am Kung-Fu.”

Kathy looks at him in total fear.

“These are pictures of me at my kung-fu.”

She sees pictures of him dressed up in his uniform. “Oh, you’re a black belt.”

“Do you know about kung-fu?”

“Not very much.”

“I am very good. I like doing that: I don’t like violence. I don’t go with women because they’re tricky. They don’t do things honestly. I only go with men.”

She relaxes and looks at the girly pictures. “Are those your relatives, that woman over there?”

“That’s a picture of my aunt and her two children. They now live in Boston. Do you know Boston?”

“Very well. I used to live there.”

“I’d like to go there.” There’s a huge market for the private yacht owners in smuggling Haitians to go anywhere in the U.S. They talk about their relatives and kung-fu for a long long time. Kathy and the huge gentle man like each other very much.

When Patrick returns for Kathy, she doesn’t want to leave.

“You said you wanted to see the doctor.”

She tells the Kung-fu man she’ll return to him as soon as she’s finished with the voodoo doctor.

Patrick and Kathy’re walking upward in the thick dust. When they reach a black Pontiac parked by the corner, he tells her to wait there until someone comes for her.

How will she know who that someone is? She’ll know.

Fifteen minutes pass by. She sees a girl in a bright bright green skirt walking toward her. She sees, in the distance, Patrick’s hand waving at her. The girl smiles at her so she follows her.

The girl walks part ways up the same road, then turns to her left. There are no more roads. The girl walks into a mass of dust, on a mass of dust, down ten feet of only slightly horizontal rocks, into a section that's unlike anything Kathy's seen in Port-au-Prince.

There's a mass of dust-ground and approximately ten feet by eight feet and six feet high thatched huts. People are everywhere. Small black goats and roosters and black and white hens and lots and lots of children. Everyone squawking and cackling crying gossiping. Hotter than ever. Women sitting in the dust and women sitting by round straw baskets full of one kind of food and one woman sitting under an improvised cloth canopy by a table holding a tray of some home-made confection and women walking around and women washing clothes in some bowls of water and women holding babies maybe suckling them. The girl walks past these people without stopping, she walks around a hut, down, turns a sharp corner around another hut, straight onward, past almost a row of huts. Kathy follows her.

The girl stops by the door of one of the brown ten feet by eight feet huts and enters. Actually there's no door, only a red curtain. The roof is corroded metal. A narrow cot lies against the back wall of the hut. A rough table lies against the left wall. Two wood chairs. To the right, a middle-aged man so wrinkled and thin he looks old sits in a chair facing a smaller wood table.

Patrick's sitting on a chair between the old man and the back wall. "You have to buy some candles."

"How much money?"

"Three dollars."

Kathy gives Patrick this money. He gives the money to a woman who's sitting in the hut. There are three women sitting in the hut: two on the bed and one (the girl who led Kathy to the hut) on the floor.

The père lights a white candle. Then he lights a cigarette with the candle flame and gives it to Patrick. He lights another cigarette and gives it to Kathy. He lights another cigarette for himself. He speaks only Creole. Patrick translates for Kathy but Kathy suspects that Patrick isn't saying to her what the père says to him.

The père opens a small Bible and begins to recite a passage rapidly in a monotone. Then his head sinks and he makes loud hiccups. "He's receiving the spirit," Patrick tells Kathy. The père shakes Patrick's hand, then Kathy's hand. His grip is unusually strong and sharp. The père rubs some liquid from a bottle covered with red cloth over his face and hands. He

puts a match to the top of this bottle; the bottle lights up; immediately he puts his hand over the bottle top. The bottle sticks to his hand. He passes the hand-and-bottle round his head. When he pulls the bottle off of his hand, there's a loud pop and it looks like the skin of his hand is going to come away with the bottle.

The ceremony's begun.

It's very hot inside the unlighted hut, much hotter than it was outside the hut in the dust under the direct burning sun. Everyone inside the hut's sweating.

Kathy doesn't remember exactly what and when happens from now on because she's so hot and because she's getting dizzier and dizzier. Certain incidents stick out in her mind.

The père takes a drink from the red-cloth-covered bottle. He hands the bottle to Patrick to take a drink. Patrick drinks. He hands the bottle to Kathy to drink. Kathy drinks. It's cheap rum.

The père pours rum into an approximately foot diameter tin bowl. Many objects are in the bowl: a Virgin Mary, some rocks, some sticks, a small skull, some beads, the white candle. He puts a match to the rum, poof! Everything alight.

The père asks Kathy to write in a small green notebook. She writes down her name. "Anything else?" Kathy asks Patrick. She writes down her age.

The père says he needs somethings so he can begin his work for Kathy. He writes about fifteen words down on a small piece of white paper. "Give him some money," Patrick tells Kathy. "How much?" "It'll only be about three dollars." "Is this going to cost me any more money?" "This is important. You have to realize that you're doing something that could be the most important thing for you. He wants to work for you and he needs certain things to work with." "I only have a twenty." Kathy gives one of the women the twenty. She goes out of the hut to purchase the somethings.

The père gives Kathy a small dusty bottle with some clear liquid in it. She swallows. He smiles and takes back the bottle. "That'll be better for you," says Patrick. "You'll see what'll happen."

It's incredibly hot in the hut. Sweat runs down everyone's face. Kathy doesn't think she feels anything.

Everything takes incredibly long.

The père's singing again. The women on the bed join in singing. Kathy sings along. How the hell am I able to sing in a language I don't know, Kathy thinks to herself. The père and the women're happy Kathy's singing with them.

The père lights a cigar with the white candle's flame. He gives it to Patrick. He lights another cigar with the white candle's flame. He gives it to Kathy. He lights another cigar with the white candle's flame for himself. Everyone smokes his cigars.

The père talks to Patrick. Patrick tells Kathy she'll have to give the père some money because he's working for her. She understands. He's a worker. "How much?" "Ten dollar." Kathy gives the père a ten-dollar bill. He carelessly throws the bill on the wood table next to a huge beaten-up skull. "I don't have any more money," Kathy says, "I can't give you any more money." She's worried.

"How much money do you make in the United States?" Patrick asks Kathy. "Seven dollars a day when I work." "Wooo. You know why all the people up there," Patrick points to the invisible hills where all the rich people in Port-au-Prince live, "are rich? The doctor works for them. The doctor is going to work for you. This is very very important. The doctor is going to work for you for six . . . seven hundred a week." Kathy looks into the witch doctor's eyes. "I don't want money," she says. "I want you to understand. More, I want to do good for others." The père smiles and says, "You have a great force in you. You must go upwards." His hands motion strongly upwards. "I can help you go upwards." Kathy smiles. She feels she and the père understand each other. She thinks Patrick's becoming a nuisance. "I would like that." The père shakes each of Kathy's hands quickly and firmly.

The père begins singing. Everyone starts singing.

The woman returns with about ten small envelopes, a bottle of cheap perfume, a bottle of rum. She gives fifteen dollars to Patrick. Patrick gives the fifteen dollars to Kathy.

The père takes the envelopes, perfume, and rum. He opens the rum, pours it into the dusty bottle, and drinks. He gives the bottle to Patrick. Patrick drinks. Patrick gives the bottle to Kathy. Kathy drinks. Everyone drinks a few more rounds. "I work with rum this first time," the père says.

The père lights up a cigarette with the white candle's flame. Gives it to Kathy. Lights another cigarette with the white candle's flame. Gives it to Patrick. Lights a cigarette with the white candle's flame for himself. Everyone smokes.

"Give me twenty cents for more cigarettes," Patrick tells Kathy. Kathy gives Patrick the money. "Also three dollars for another bottle of perfume. The father wants to do something special for you." Kathy thinks the père hasn't said anything to Patrick, but she gives the money anyways.

The père pours the perfume into an old thin bottle, about five inches high. Then he opens one of the small envelopes. He carefully shovels some of the lavender powder from this envelope into the bottle. Each of the envelopes contains a different color powder. The envelopes say things such as AMOUR, REINE DE GRACE. After he's opened and closed all the envelopes, he pours some of the rum from the dusty bottle, raw white rum, into the five inch high bottle. Everyone drinks some more rum. He shakes the five inch high bottle. He puts some brown dried leaves and branches into the five inch high bottle. He takes the rattle that's lying on the floor to the left of the wood table, shakes the rattle over everything. He puffs on his cigarette, blows smoke over everything, blows smoke into the five inch high bottle, and seals the bottle with an improvised paper cork.

The père rubs his face and hands with some liquid. He pours the same liquid on Kathy's hands and motions for her to rub her face. She does.

The père takes some salve and rubs it on her lips. He motions her to do she doesn't understand what. She kisses her arms and breasts. He smiles.

The woman returns with the cigarettes.

"He's given me a secret for you," Patrick tells Kathy. "What is it?" "I'll tell you later. I have something to tell you later." "Why can't you tell me now?" "He said I should tell you after we leave. He said you have to sit by the sea after we leave here. It's necessary you sit by the sea. I'll tell you then."

The père holds a pack of filthy cards in his hands. He puts three cards down on the table. Jack of Diamonds, dark queen, Ace of clubs. He reshuffles the cards and cuts. He puts some more cards down on the table. He reshuffles and cuts. He asks Kathy to cut the cards. She cuts toward him. He smiles. He puts about ten cards down on the table. He quickly puts them back in the deck.

The père speaks to Patrick in a quick monotone. "Recently someone's been speaking to you badly," Patrick translates for Kathy. Pause. "Is this true?" "Uh yeah . . . yeah maybe. I had a fight with a boyfriend in Cap Haitian right before I left. But it's O.K. now. We made up. That's not really speaking badly." The père speaks again in his rapid monotone. Patrick translates. "You've just missed a very good chance in the U.S." "I dunno," Kathy says. The old man's not really hitting the mark, Kathy thinks to herself. "The father says he's going to work for you for six to seven hundred dollars a week. This is very important. He says you have bonne chance." Kathy talks directly to the père. "Je ne veux pas d'argent assez que je veux travailler pour des

autres.” The father smiles.

The father starts singing. Everyone sings along. One of the middle-aged women who’s sitting on the bed leads the singing.

Patrick talks to a woman next to him, who suckles a baby.

“He wants to give you something else,” Patrick says to Kathy. The père’s carefully spooning some powder from each of the small white envelopes on to a crumbled piece of paper. When he finishes with the last envelope, he seals the paper and says something in his quick monotone to Patrick. “When you’re alone, you have to rub this all over your body. If you don’t do this, nothing he’s doing for you will work.” The père nods. Kathy nods.

The père takes the red-cloth-covered bottle. He lights its top with the white candle’s flame. Poof. Quickly he places the palm of his hand over the top. The bottle sticks to his palm. He passes this hand-and-bottle three times around his head.

The leading woman, a middle-aged woman, starts drawing a vever on the stone floor. Everyone else sings lackadaisically while she sprinkles the white corn flour from a china dish on to the floor. The sign’s a long backbone line with curlicues coming out of its sides. One heart in the middle. At the bottom of this vever she draws a funny hideous head. Then she draws a second vever which Kathy’s too out of it to see. When the woman’s finished using the flour, he nods his approval.

The père places the human skull that’s on the wood table on the funny hideous head. He places two rocks near the skull. He shakes the rattle all over the skull. He’s not satisfied. He takes the light blue nailpolish bottle that’s on the wood table and pours some small gray beads from the nailpolish bottle on to the center of the first vever. He holds the lighted white candle next to these beads. The beads light up, explode. He places the human skull on top of the exploded beads. He puts two rocks near the skull. He’s very careful to put everything in exactly the right place. He sticks the lighted white candle into a depression in the center of the skull. He sprinkles rum around the lighted white candle without extinguishing the light. He takes a small red-plastic-frame mirror and passes the mirror three times around the center of Kathy’s body. He sticks the mirror in front of her face so she has to look at herself. Kathy’s almost unconscious. He passes the mirror around her head three times. He places the mirror on the vever near the skull but not touching the skull. He places the five inch high corked bottle next to, leaning against the side of, the skull. He picks a string of many-colored beads up from the junk on the floor to his left and throws the

beads around the lighted white candle. He says something to Patrick. Patrick says, "She can't give you fifty dollars." The père and Patrick argue about how much money Kathy must give. Patrick says to Kathy, "Wait a second. Listen closely to me. You have to give something more. Otherwise all that he's doing won't work for you. What he's doing is very important. This is very important. You must realize that what he's doing could be the most important thing in your life." "How much?" Kathy asks Patrick. This is an art piece, Kathy thinks to herself. "Ten dollar. And when you get back to the United States, you buy him a watch. Not a good watch, you understand." Kathy gives a ten-dollar bill to the père. She has no more money left. He throws the ten-dollar bill on the skull. It falls in back of the skull. He pours rum around the lighted white candle without extinguishing its flame. He shakes the rattle over the skull and the vevers.

The père draws a cross on Kathy's forehead.

The père motions Kathy to get up. He turns her around three times. He pushes her around the vevers three times clockwise. He pushes her around the vevers three times counterclockwise. He picks up the small plastic red-frame mirror and passes the mirror around her body. He shows Kathy to herself. He pushes her around the vevers three times clockwise. He pushes her around the vevers three times counterclockwise.

Kathy's facing the red curtain. The père tells Kathy she has to return here. She can bring a friend with her. He gives her the filled five inch high bottle and a green plastic soap case containing the powders. He tells her she can't look back.

Chickens and goats run around. The ground's so dry, it's almost sand. This sand flies everywhere. Children squawl and yell. Women sit on the sand-covered almost non-existent doorsteps of huts and low wood chairs outside the huts. Women talk to each other. Women with baskets on their heads walk in the fine dust. Women carry huge amounts of wet clothes in their arms. There are a few men.

"Goodbye," says the girl in the bright green skirt.

Kathy turns around and walks outside into the sun. She's more dazed than before.

Kathy Acker