

Blan Fou

A Novel of Haiti, 1991-1992

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PREFACE

This is all true, but much of it may also be real...

Blan Fou is drawn from my personal memories, notes, and reports collected while I was in Haiti, during the political upheaval of 1991 and 1992

It includes depictions of violence and systemic harm, but also of bravery and hope. People, organizations and places are representative. No character is based on an actual person. Some events are described in a chronology that is not historically accurate.

Haitian Kreyòl (or "Creole") is used without direct, in-line translation. A glossary is included with English translation. I hope you'll forgive any break in rhythm when reading a Haitian phrase for the first time.

Thank you for reading.

Yours in solidarity (no exceptions),

The Author and Unreliable Recaller

Table of Contents

PREFACE.....	2
ACT I – STORMING	4
PART ONE: ESCAPE / ARRIVAL	4
Escape	4
Arrival.....	8
PART TWO: MISEDUCATION.....	14
Dechokaj.....	14
Missionaries.....	20
ACT II – FORMING	29
PART THREE: REBELLION.....	29
Networks	29
Protect and Serve.....	35
Self-Defense	42
PART FOUR: COLLABORATORS.....	51
Safety First.....	51
Community	54
PART FIVE: LESSONS.....	63
Resilience	63
Choices.....	65
Survival.....	68
ACT III – PERFORMING.....	71
PART SIX: BETRAYAL	71
Observers.....	71
Huddled Masses	75
PART SEVEN: MEN WITH GUNS.....	79
Martial Law	79
Police State	84
PART EIGHT: DEFEND.....	88
Adapt.....	88
Organize	92
Extract.....	96
PART NINE: SURVIVE / DIE?	103
Exit.....	103
Acknowledgements	107
GLOSSARY OF HAITIAN PHRASES.....	108

ACT I – STORMING

PART ONE: ESCAPE / ARRIVAL

Escape

December 1991

Caribbean Sea

Northwest of Port-de-Paix, Haiti

Henri sinks into the sea, his lungs burning as he fights his way toward the surface. It's so dark that he struggles to tell which direction is up, but the sound of the storm that capsized the small fishing boat is still raging. He orients himself toward the sound and forces his arms and legs to keep pumping. Just as he begins to see lighter colored water above him, a strong hand grabs his foot and begins pulling him away from the surface.

He knows it's one of the other passengers and considers if he can somehow help them. But with his lungs burning, he knows it's only moments before he will give in and breathe sea water. Henri makes a terrible choice. With his free leg, he begins kicking and pushing against the hand clutching his left foot. Finally, he feels the vice-like grip break, his fellow passenger's cold fingertips caressing his ankle as their owner sinks into the deep. With the last of his strength, Henri kicks and pulls with his arms until he finally breaks the surface and can take a deep breath.

Earlier that morning...

Henri boards the fishing boat at the ancient pier in Port-de-Paix along with three other labor union organizers and a few dozen people he doesn't recognize. Most of the passengers are young men but there a few young mothers with small children. Just before boarding, the "travel agent" at the end of the pier announces that the passage from Haiti to Miami will cost more than expected. The man explains that due to the economic embargo, the black-market price of fuel for

the small outboard motor has doubled. For Henri, there is no choice but to pay. He needs to get off this island today, doesn't have the money for a flight, and can't get past the military and Tonton Macoute informants at the airport anyway. After much shouting, threatening, and eventual negotiation, the additional money is paid and the passengers are loaded along with several jerrycans of fuel.

The captain explains the rules of the voyage. He should be called Captain. His first and last name are not important. His only crew member is named Bouki. No one should speak to Bouki because he's not very bright and easily distracted. Everyone must follow Captain's orders without hesitation. Each passenger is responsible for their own food and water. None will be provided. He doesn't want to know whether passengers have travel documents or not. While none of the passengers wear life jackets, he explains that there are inflatable life rafts in the hold which can be used if they need to abandon ship for some reason. Gesturing behind him, he adds reassuringly that the small dinghy floating behind their vessel will serve as a life boat if God wills that they need it. The captain and his one-man crew wear the only life jackets because they will be last to leave the boat if there's a problem. They expect to arrive off the shore of Florida before nightfall in two days. There will be no refunds before or after arrival, for any reason.

After all the last-minute arrangements are settled, the travel agent unties the frayed mooring rope. The fishing boat pushes off and begins to make its way toward open water. There is a light wind this morning, so the captain raises the small boat's shabby sail and explains that he'll use the outboard motor if the wind dies down. By mid-day they are out of sight of land and into open water. As they pass the last rusty and half-drowned navigation buoy, the lapping waves turn into rolling swells and several of the passengers begin to get sea sick.

As the sun sets, Henri notices one of the young mothers struggling to nurse her small baby. He didn't pay close attention to introductions as they settled in, but he thinks her name is Jocelyn. She's barely more than a child herself, and is trying unsuccessfully to hide a jagged scar across her otherwise flawless left cheek. She's already drunk most of the water in her gallon jugs and appears to be dehydrated after a day of exposure to the sun. The mother makes eye contact and glances with a pleading look toward the two full water jugs next to him.

Henri looks at the baby, the infant's light brown skin already burning in the sun. He considers offering Jocelyn some of his water but instead asks her baby's name. Jocelyn beams and replies

that the baby's name is Espwa. She is one month old today! The child cries softly, pushes her face deep into Jocelyn's open shirt. The baby is exhausted and pulls forlornly at her mother's sun-burnt and chapped nipple. Jocelyn winces in pain but doesn't pull away from the infant's pursed lips. Henri asks if Espwa resembles her father.

The young mother looks stricken and stares far over the horizon. As the sun's last gasp of crimson sinks into the sea, Jocelyn seems even younger than before she stepped onto the boat. The spell is broken when her facial expression sets in determination. She adjusts her breast against the baby's suckling mouth before replying that the child's father is dead. Then she hunches over Espwa's tiny form and sobs quietly.

As the sun disappears over the western horizon, the wind picks up strength behind them. At first, everyone smiles and laughs as the tiny boat begins to pick up speed and the temperature cools. But as twilight turns to night, Captain begins to look nervously over his shoulder. One by one, each passenger turns to see huge thunderhead clouds forming behind them as the wind strengthens. As the first stars begin to appear, lightning flashes across the sky and the sound of thunder grows closer.

Concern turns to fear as Captain begins giving sharp orders to Bouki, "Top off the fuel in the motor. Get it started now." As the crewman unscrews the cap on the motor's fuel tank, Captain lowers the sail. The wind is blowing much harder now, but he's able to get the sail lowered and stowed as rain begins to fall. The warm, soft rain is a relief and many of the passengers hold their heads back, opening their mouths to swallow it as it falls. A few strip out of their clothing and try to wring their wet clothes into empty water jugs.

Suddenly, everyone's attention is drawn to Captain as he begins shouting and swearing at Bouki. The motor will not start. He shoves Bouki aside and begins pulling on the starter rope. The rope pulls freely but the motor will not fire or sputter. After several minutes of pulling on the rope without result, Captain becomes winded. Slowly, he opens the motor's fuel tank and confirms that it isn't somehow empty. Then reluctantly, as if he desperately wishes he could be anywhere else, he puts his nose to the tank opening and sniffs. He turns slowly to Bouki and says in a low yet urgent voice, "The fuel doesn't smell right. Give me the can you used to fill it." Bouki hands him one of the fuel cans. Captain carefully sniffs its opening, pours some onto his

hand, and tastes it. His shoulders slump and he looks at Bouki. “That mal leve bastard sold us water, not fuel. You put water in our fuel tank. This motor will never start.”

Everyone stares in disbelief, until all the passengers start asking questions at once. They shout over each other, the entire boat rocking violently as everyone struggles to reach Captain on his perch. They plead with him to say it’s all a ruse. In less than a minute, the passengers exhaust themselves and begin to cry or stare off into space. Henri watches as the captain and Bouki exchange a long look. Captain nods and without another word, the two of them climb out of the wallowing fishing boat and into the dinghy.

Before anyone can react, Captain cuts the dinghy’s rope and shoves away from the side of the larger vessel. Bouki begins to pull on the oars until the life boat is out of reach of anyone on the fishing boat. Now the passengers begin to scream and shout. Some fall onto the slippery deck while others plead, some threaten, everyone trying to be heard over the din. But Captain doesn’t turn back and Bouki keeps pulling on the oars. This has the effect of silencing the passengers, with the exception of some racking sobs. When Captain is barely visible, he calls back to them, “We’re going for help. Just stay in the boat until we return.”

The dinghy disappears into the mist and fog. The passengers begin looking around frantically, shoving past each other to look into the hold for life jackets, but each emerges onto the deck empty-handed. The boat’s mast suddenly explodes above them as it’s struck by lightning. Everyone on the boat crowds to the stern as far as possible from the mast. Another bolt lights the sky and Henri sees an enormous wave coming straight at them. The wave effortlessly lifts the bow of the boat out of the water and he finds himself launched into the stormy sea.

Henri kicks and pulls with his arms until he breaks the surface and can take a deep breath. That deep gulp is mostly seawater and a puff of air, as a massive wave crashes over Henri and submerges him again. He manages to fight his way to the surface and through streaming eyes sees some debris floating nearby. He swims toward it and grabs onto a chunk of wood with both hands. After taking a few coughing and retching breaths, he begins to get his bearings. Another flash and crack, and the struggling fishing boat capsizes. It slips silently into the inky water, taking another handful of passengers with it. One moment they are screaming and pleading to “Bon Dieu”. The next, they are gone as if God never even dreamed of them.

Another flash splits the sky and illuminates the aftermath. Henri sees Jocelyn struggling to keep Espwa's head above water in the churning sea. He tries to swim toward her but the waves are too high. Other passengers sink into the water around them, their hands reaching toward the sky as they sink. The wind shifts, pushing Henri toward Jocelyn and Espwa as another wave washes over them. The rain is falling sideways now, its hail-like drops and gusting wind flaying them mercilessly. Henri turns his face back and forth in agony as the hard rain lashes his exposed skin. Another wave washes over him but he stays afloat. When his vision clears, Henri sees Jocelyn still floating next to him on the debris pile, baby Espwa clutched to her chest as another wave rises behind them.

Arrival

January 1991

Caribbean Sea

Northwest of Port-au-Prince, Haiti

Eleven months before Henri, Jocelyn, and baby Espwa set out on their voyage...

The whine of jet engines increases in pitch, as the aging Boeing 727 begins its approach to Port-au-Prince International Airport. Kevin instinctively tightens his seat belt as a current of anxiety washes through him. Around him, Haitians stir and look at each other nervously, arranging their wicker bags and whispering to their children in Creole. Kevin doesn't speak much Creole, but he understands body language. He's the only white passenger on this flight but seems connected to the Haitians by a thread of fear. No one knows what to expect when they land, but everyone expects the worst.

Kevin looks back out his window and watches the morning sun fall across the reefs below. As the plane descends, scrub vegetation becomes visible on the ridges that claw their way up steep mountain sides. A slight change of heading and the city of Port-au-Prince comes into view,

sprawled across the horizon like a hazy stain. The wing flaps begin to move, revealing oily stains as they adjust. A loud thumping sound startles the passengers as the landing gear is lowered. The plane passes over the island of La Gonave, low enough to reveal the drying fishing nets, buoys, and colorful boats pulled up onto shore. An updraft of wind rushes up and swats at the plane, the turbulence pulling Kevin against his seat belt and rattling open an overhead bin.

The pilot clears his throat into the intercom and makes an announcement in French. After a brief pause, he repeats in accented English, “On behalf of Haiti Trans Air, welcome to Port-au-Prince, Haiti. The temperature on the ground is 95 degrees Fahrenheit. We hope you enjoy your stay”. The plane continues its descent and the airport comes into view through the haze, its single landing strip surrounded by palm trees. As the plane banks into its final approach, Kevin sees thick columns of black smoke rising into the air from all over the city.

The plane touches down with engines screaming and bounces unsteadily into the air, before slamming back onto the runway. The rattling aircraft settles back onto its landing gear and slows, before taxiing to a stop fifty yards from the passenger terminal. The passengers are up on their feet now, elbowing each other as they disentangle themselves and drag their luggage down from the overhead bins. Others watch expectantly as a set of stairs is wheeled across the tarmac. Kevin sees men in military uniforms with automatic weapons and sniper rifles posted atop the airport terminal. They glance at the arriving airliner but seem much more interested in what’s happening on the other side of the building.

A flight attendant opens the door and a gust of hot, fetid air rushes into the cabin. Kevin barely notices the heat though, as the smell overwhelms his senses. Sewage, rotting vegetation, brackish sea air, and exhaust fumes, but mostly sewage. He grew up in a farming community and can instantly smell the difference between pig, chicken, and cow manure. But this is something else entirely. When visiting New York City last summer, he walked outside after an afternoon thunderstorm and that was the worst thing he’d ever smelled until now. Resisting the urge to pull his shirt up over his nose, Kevin breathes through his mouth instead.

In the aisle behind him, a man slams into the back of Kevin’s knees with an oversized carry-on suitcase. Kevin shuffles his way toward the exit, his own backpack thudding against each seat. The sunlight temporarily blinds him as he steps out of the cabin. He makes his way down the stairs and waits with the jostling crowd until he finds his foot locker. The wind shifts as he

drags it across the rough surface of the tarmac. He no longer notices the smell of sewage, as his eyes water from the acrid scent of burning rubber.

Kevin makes his way into the shaded entrance of the airport terminal and follows the crowd toward Immigration and Customs. There's no air conditioning and his shirt is instantly drenched in sweat. He prepares his bags for inspection before realizing that no one is very interested in his passport or what he's bringing into the country. Walking slowly, he leaves the secured area and heads toward the Arrivals Lounge. A dozen soldiers shove through the crowd and lead a few handcuffed young men into a back room. Glancing up at the Departures board, Kevin sees that all flights have been cancelled. The Arrivals board shows the same. No one is getting in or out of Haiti by air. Not even from Cuba.

Kevin emerges from the airport into the crowd that are waiting for friends and family. He looks around and sees a short white man with thick glasses, gray streaked black hair, and a large mustache. They make eye contact and as the only white people in sight, approach each other. As he gets closer, Kevin sees the man is holding a piece of paper with his name on it. "Tim?" he asks. The man nods curtly and without smiling or shaking hands, reaches for Kevin's backpack, "Yes, I'm Tim. Welcome to Haiti. Let's get out of here!"

Kevin follows as Tim maneuvers his way through the crowd, waving some sort of credential whenever someone steps aside too slowly. Kevin tries to seem friendly while avoiding eye contact and making sure not to hit anyone's legs with his footlocker. Sidestepping a group of hard faced young Haitian men, Kevin has to stop abruptly when one steps in front of him, makes deliberate eye contact and sneers, "Blan fou". After the man steps aside and Kevin is a few yards away, he quietly asks what that meant. With a small smile Tim replies, "Crazy white guy."

As they get free of the crowd clustered outside the airport, Tim leads Kevin quickly toward the parking area. They pass a pair of soldiers leaning against a large banyan tree with faded uniforms, dented green helmets, and very new looking Uzi's. The soldiers watch closely as the Americans approach a red Isuzu Trooper. One pushes himself away from the tree, drops his cigarette, and walks toward the SUV while unslinging his Uzi.

A young Haitian boy emerges from between some nearby vehicles. He's roughly ten or twelve years old and is dressed in tattered shorts, a faded Chicago Bulls t-shirt, and plastic flip flops. Tim hands him some money and says something in Creole. The boy beams a bright smile and

replies with a phrase ending in “Merci!” The soldier notices this exchange, slips his Uzi back onto his shoulder, and returns to his observation post under the tree. Tim glances at Kevin and says, “Always pay the tax for someone to keep an eye on your vehicle. That kid’ll split it with the soldiers.”

Tim unlocks the Isuzu and pulls a tarp out of the cargo area. They load Kevin’s bags, cover them with the tarp, and climb quickly into the vehicle. Tim starts the engine and rolls down his window, “Gas is too expensive here to run the air conditioning”. As Tim weaves through the parking lot toward the airport exit, Kevin rolls down his passenger window and lets the humid air cool his skin. He asks, “How did you know I’d be on this flight? Did someone from my NGO reach you?” Tim looks at Kevin without expression before returning his eyes to the road, “International phone calls have been down since the military took control. If you weren’t on this flight, you weren’t coming.”

Airport Access Road

They finally work their way out of the parking lot and make a right turn onto a potholed access road. Kevin immediately thinks of a cattle chute used to slaughter beef. On the left is a chain-link fence protecting an industrial park. On the right is the perimeter wall around the airport, topped with barbed wire and shards of glass. Crowds of men, women, and children are on foot, moving in groups on the gravel shoulder and out into the street.

The atmosphere feels a bit like a party. The crowd moves as lava down the street, chanting, with the throbbing beat of African-style hand drums and referee whistles. Kevin sees a few men with rebar studded clubs and machetes mixed into the crowd. Tim begins to slow the SUV, “These mobs are all over the city right now. The Army says they’ve taken control to prevent another coup attempt, but no one really trusts them. This crowd might be demonstrating against the military in support of Aristide. Or they might be trying to loot the industrial park.” He points to a laminated press pass on the dashboard, “Our radio station placard should keep them from getting too aggressive.”

Whenever a car gets too close to the demonstrators, they shout angrily and throw debris back at it. A bottle smashes into a windshield a few cars ahead and the crowd cheers. The drums beat

louder and Kevin feels his heartbeat settling into the same rhythm; vision pulsing with the insistent beat. Traffic soon grinds to a halt and the Americans are surrounded in every direction, pinned motionless by a mass of humanity. Kevin reaches to roll up his window but Tim says very quietly, “Don’t. Do. That. If you roll up your window, they’ll take it as a sign of fear and disrespect.” Struggling to maintain a calm expression as the drums increase their tempo, Kevin looks ahead while avoiding eye contact with anyone in the crowd.

The noise is deafening. As the crowd presses closer, they see the two Americans and begin gesturing wildly and shouting, “Blan! Blan!” People start crowding around Kevin’s open passenger window, pointing and gesturing toward him. He’s startled but manages not to shrink back from them. It becomes impossible to avoid eye contact, with faces peering at him from all sides. Kevin adjusts the focus of his eyes so that he isn’t really looking at anything; his version of the thousand-yard stare. His lack of reaction seems to deescalate things and some of the people begin to grin widely, as if this is all just a good-natured prank. Kevin smiles back, laughing along, and nods his head as if to say, “Good one! You had me going there.” As the group moves on, a break opens in the traffic and Tim accelerates slowly, careful to avoid any sudden movements.

They round a corner in the road and see what’s causing the traffic jam. Two overturned tractor trailers have been pulled across the road, forming a zig zag path between them. The makeshift checkpoint is manned by several dozen young men. They don’t have any visible weapons but are collecting a toll from motorists before letting them drive between the trailers. With no way around the obstacle, Tim slowly approaches the checkpoint. As they pull forward a boy runs up to the young men, shouting and gesturing beyond the trailers behind him. Without another word, the group scatters.

An open-sided military truck rolls into view and stops at the barrier. Soldiers jump down from the truck and shoulder their weapons, aiming them toward the surrounding crowd. The crowd shrinks back, shrieking in fear and shouting angrily. An older man in civilian clothes and dark sunglasses steps down from the truck and begins gesturing toward the crowd and shouting orders. He assembles a group of bystanders and directs them to begin pushing the trailers off the road. Kevin flinches as one of the soldiers slaps the fender of Tim’s SUV and gestures for them to begin moving ahead. Tim thanks the soldier and they pull away.

After getting past the roadblock, Tim is able to pick up more speed. They pass piles of smoldering tires every few hundred yards. Kevin sits back in his seat and enjoys the breeze coming into his window, even though the air is thick with the smell of smoke. He realizes that his hands are shaking and he exhales slowly. Tim glances over, "You OK?" Kevin takes a few more breaths, "I think so". Tim looks back at the road and shifts into a higher gear, "They've mostly left foreigners alone. So far, the US has stayed out of it so we're not targets." He gestures again toward the press pass on the dashboard, "We were the first station to broadcast that the police were behind the coup, and not the Army. The people see us as the good guys because of that." They pass the infamous slums of Cite Soleil on the right, the rusty tin roofs and cement block shacks extending as far as the eye can see. "I'm going to stay on the main roads though, just to be careful. There are a lot of scores being settled in these neighborhoods."

They continue in silence. It doesn't seem long before they have to slow again, a line of traffic forming in front of them. A dark plume of smoke billows into the sky ahead. Tim downshifts rapidly and leans out the driver side window, trying to see the cause. "There's another roadblock ahead. They're burning tires again." He looks quickly over his shoulder and squints at the passing buildings. "No way around it. We have to get to that intersection. I'm not seeing a large crowd though. Maybe they set the tires on fire and then left."

Approaching the intersection, they see a large pile of burning tires forming a sort of traffic circle. No one has organized a roadblock, but the traffic lights aren't working either. They enter the chaotic stream of vehicles trying to avoid each other, the burning tires, and swarms of angry pedestrians. Awaiting their turn to avoid the tires, Kevin looks out his window at a smoldering pile of rubble. He slowly realizes that he's looking at the remains of a charred and decapitated body; its hands and feet cut off and burned beyond recognition. Not wanting to believe what he's seeing, Kevin slowly accepts that the musculature and bones are definitely human. It's lying on its back, arms and legs outstretched toward the sky, as if praying and begging one last time.

Kevin finally squeezes his eyes shut but too late, he's certain that he's looking at what used to be a man. The SUV begins to move and Kevin slowly opens his eyes in time to see the name on the road sign overhead, "Boulevard Jean-Jacque Dessalines". Hero of the Haitian slave revolution whose rules of engagement toward the French slave owners were quite simple, "Koupe tet. Boule kay."

PART TWO: MISEDUCATION

Dechokaj

January – February 1991

Delmas Highway

Tim maneuvers the Isuzu around the burning debris and makes the turn onto Delmas Highway. When they're up to speed again Kevin asks, "Did you see that? Was that a burnt body?" Tim hits the brakes abruptly as a group of protestors step into the street, waving their arms, palms down, in a gesture to stop. Instead, he downshifts, hits the horn and accelerator, yanks the wheel to the left, and swerves into oncoming traffic to avoid the crowd. A large military-style truck barrels toward them, a handful of soldiers peeking around the truck cab with gun muzzles pointed vaguely in their direction.

Every vehicle suddenly hits their horn at once. It seems to Kevin that everyone is intentionally accelerating toward a head-on collision and he braces himself for impact. He hears the Trooper's engine screaming above the din as Tim yanks the wheel hard to the right, then left again, just in time to avoid a head-on collision. Kevin slowly releases his grip on the dashboard and looks over at Tim, who puts his elbow out his window and calmly continues as if it's just another morning on I-95.

Tim glances at Kevin, shifts again, and then continues, "I didn't see a body, but I wouldn't be surprised. They probably gave him the Pere LeBrun treatment". After a pause he glances at Kevin, "Pere LeBrun means 'Father Fire'. Did they cover that in your training?" Kevin shakes his head slowly, "I heard necklacing was happening, but not by that name..." Tim pauses and glances in the rear view mirror before continuing, "It's like necklacing. But, those machetes..." He trails off before continuing, "The mob captures someone they think is on the other side." He takes his hands off the wheel long enough to make air quotes, "They fill a tire with gasoline, put it over his head, and set it afire. Then they cut off his hands, so he can't take the tire off before they light it."

The highway narrows into two lanes and traffic slows. Tim casually negotiates another game of chicken, while everyone tries to nose their vehicle into the remaining lane. Taking advantage of the traffic jam, street urchins and vendors of every imaginable beverage and food walk between the cars offering great deals. Tim notices Kevin watching a young boy in a tattered Hooters t-shirt and one leather sandal. The boy walks along the line of vehicles, holding a cup at each window. No one pays him any mind. Tim says, “Best to get used to that. You’ll never have enough to make a difference. Besides, most of what’s in that cup will go right into the pocket of the orphanage gang who him.” Traffic begins to move before Kevin needs to act on this new perspective and the street vendors scatter.

Kevin’s window is still open as they drive uphill. The air is cooler, with less smoke and humidity. Tin-roof huts blend with concrete and then disappear. Street vendor carts are replaced by retail stores and a few restaurants; all closed and shuttered. He notes the shotgun armed civilians on roofs, but sees no military or police presence. Kevin asks, “Is this area more secure?” Tim doesn’t answer until he completes a left turn onto a street called Delmas-something, the road sign badly faded and illegible.

He points toward a two-story house with blackened doors and windows. “It depends. The guy who lived there was a Tonton Macoute back in the Duvalier days. And like they say, Once a Duvalierist. Always a Duvalierist.” Kevin looks into the blackened interior as Tim continues, “When the power went out the night of the coup, he and his family were thrown into the street and their house was set afire. His wife and children were left alive, but were forced to watch him get Pere Lebrun. The term they’re using for all this is dechokaj. It means uprooting. Like I said, lots of old scores being settled.”

Tim makes a few more quick turns onto unmarked streets in a neighborhood of one and two-story homes. Most are built like bunkers with steel bars in their windows. Many appear frozen in construction time, with partially built cinder block walls and rebar jutting in all directions. Except for bags of cement, all the building materials display markings that show they were imported from the US. Since there’s no official customs process in Haiti, it makes sense that construction would stop and start as bribery and black-market conditions allow. The owners likely ran out of money or decided not to take in that extra family member from the provinces.

After a few more minutes, Tim slows in front of a large two-story house. It looks like a small fortress, surrounded by a wall of cement blocks placed in a lattice pattern to allow visibility but not access. The wall is topped with sharpened rebar and has a solid metal gate. Tim hits the horn a few times and the gate slides open. An older Haitian man emerges from behind it. “Our caretaker”, Tim explains. “He used to be a police captain and has good connections with the security forces. His information has saved this family more than once.”

As they carefully pull through the gate Tim adds, “It’s all about who you know here in Haiti. Probably everywhere, but especially here. You can’t call 911 if the mob decides they want your house.” As the caretaker pulls the gate closed behind them Tim adds, “It’s just a precaution. We’re here doing God’s work and the Haitians know it. That’s why those who stay out of politics and focus on spiritual matters have been left alone.”

Delmas

For the next week, Kevin settles into his new living arrangements with Tim’s family and Nadine, their housekeeper and cook. She lives nearby and is married to a pastor who works for a local church. The roosters always wake Kevin early and Nadine always has coffee waiting. After Tim’s family are finished with breakfast, she goes to market, cleans, and cooks the evening meal. She’s usually able to finish up in time to walk her kids home from school.

There is a lot of time spent cooking each day. Without reliable electricity or propane for stoves and ovens, most food is prepared over charcoal in the yard outside the kitchen. Haitians cook their rice and beans differently from their neighbors in the DR or Puerto Rico. The process usually takes a full day of stirring a cast iron pot. Since it’s a lot of work and Americans can never get the recipe quite right, Nadine shops each day and cooks meals with whatever is available in the market. Kevin asks Nadine to show him how to make his own coffee. She laughingly agrees to have a blan as student. He learns to roast and grind the beans, before percolating them in water over a bed of coals. The hand-powered coffee grinder was made by Nadine’s neighbor, who sells them at the Iron Market. The little aluminum coffee pots are in every kitchen and have thick wooden handles to allow the pot to be handled over high heat.

Their modern appliances require constant attention. Tim's wife, Martha constantly emphasize the rules for maintenance of the house's electrical and water systems. "You do NOT want to experience water-borne illness!". Five-minute showers at most, with no hot water other than what's been solar heated in the water drums installed on the house's roof. The refrigerator door must never be left open. The freezer never gets cold enough to freeze anything, so it's filled with water jugs. The family teaches him a sort of sing-song nursery rhyme on his first day, "Never ask for ice. Always drink from the bottle. Unless the ice cubes say Culligan!" Since Kevin once spent a hunting trip in the outhouse after drinking "pure spring water", he sings along each time.

Tim is showing Kevin the elaborate electrical system of batteries, backup power units, solar panels, and a small Honda gasoline generator. "We only get a few hours of electricity per day, so it's important that the charging leads be attached to the battery system at all times. I don't like the kids trying to connect the cables, so make sure everything is connected before you leave the house". Kevin asks, "When do you think the power will be back to normal?" Tim laughs, "I've been over ten years and this is normal. National Power can only generate electricity after paying bribes to get diesel into their generators. Then, protection money to keep the copper on the power lines and out of the scrap yards. That leaves us with rolling blackouts across a city of millions."

As Tim shuts the door to the utility closet, his teenage daughters come into the kitchen with their backpacks and Walkman headphones over their ears. Tim gets the attention of his oldest and says "You're not going to be able to drive to Mission School. I need the Isuzu. I'll be taking Kevin over to Carrefour and expect to be there all day. You'll have to hitch a ride with your mother." She sighs but replies, "Yes, Dad. Mom will make sure we get there safely." His younger daughter rolls her eyes and says, "We could walk there in ten minutes!" Tim turns to her, "We're still in safety mode and you know that. Please take this seriously. No walking on these streets. Your mother will pick you up at the Mission. Just do your homework while you wait."

Radio Protestant has a small FM station in the Petionville neighborhood just a few miles uphill from Delmas. Kevin ends up there when Tim doesn't take him to the AM station in Carrefour. Kevin doesn't have his own vehicle, so he's always hitching rides back and forth to Creole lessons and the FM station. His language acquisition is a concern for Tim, in case Kevin

gets lost or has an accident on the road in a station vehicle. Of course, Kevin's safety is his main concern. How would Kevin ever find his way home without flawless Creole?

After another week of this, Kevin is starting to "climb the walls" as Martha puts it to Tim over lunch one day. She turns to Kevin, "I heard you ask Nadine to help you with your Creole. That's a good idea, but she's trying to improve her English. It's one of the benefits of working for us, along with free tuition for her kids at the Mission School." She glances at Tim before continuing, "No problem though, I'll explain it to her." Kevin shifts in his seat, as Martha continues, "Are the language classes helping?" Kevin sighs, "They are, but I really struggle with learning written French as a foundation. I just can't "hear" what I'm seeing on the page. It's the same problem I had during training. How can I improve my ear if I'm only using Creole a few hours a day."

Tim is getting impatient, "None of the other American staff have struggled like you. What did those Haitian exiles teach you in Miami, if not their language?" Kevin opens his mouth to reply, but Martha interrupts, "Obviously, you learned a great deal before you arrived. And you're right. Everyone learns language differently." She turns back to Tim, "Kevin's an adult, but I understand your concern about liability. Why don't we let him use our Yamaha for local trips. He can start practicing his Creole by filling Nadine's shopping list at the market." Kevin nods enthusiastically, "Yes! That would help so much." Tim looks at his wife for a moment, then back to Kevin and finally replies, "First you need to get the Yamaha running and then you need to wear a helmet." He pours his coffee out into the sink, "I've got to get downtown for a meeting."

Kevin learns that the house's caretaker and guard is named Fritz. In addition to being a former police officer, he's an excellent mechanic. When Kevin tries to speak with him in Creole, Fritz laughs and stops him. "I don't have any kids in school and already speak English. Please don't make me listen to your Kreyol!" Kevin immediately roars in laughter and thanks him profusely. Fritz helps Kevin clean the Yamaha's carburetor, replace the fuel filter, gap the spark plugs, and the 175 cc engine is now running better than ever. Fritz then offers some tips for surviving on Haiti's roads. "No one likes motorcycles down here because so many zenglando attacks are by men on motorbikes." Fritz cautions, "The other drivers will run you over if they get a chance. Don't weave in and out of traffic or someone will stop that real quick." Fritz gives Kevin a heavy chain, "If you're not riding it keep it chained to something immovable. In Haiti, it's understood that if you don't secure your property, you must not need it as much as the next guy!"

Radio Protestant FM

Tim and Kevin are having a status meeting at the station in Petionville. The power is out and with no fans, the room is hot and stuffy. Tim fans himself with a sheaf of papers, “I appreciate your input on our network expansion, but we contracted with NGO Tech to maintain what we have now. I need you in the field more than I need you here. That’s why your NGO was supposed to get you up to speed on Creole before you got here.” Tim pauses and Kevin responds in a weary voice, “Your board asked NGO Tech to get me down here ASAP, with or without language skills. My orientation in Miami was a stopgap, otherwise I would have been delayed another six months.” Tim starts shuffling the papers on the desk between them, “Well, you’re here now so let’s make the best of it.” Kevin sits back in his chair, “Let’s do that. But let’s also remember that the Catholic stations will take me any time. The only reason Radio Protestant got me first is that your equipment needs the most maintenance. I still think I should be doing “train the trainer” with the technicians while learning Creole from them. They already know enough English to read the technical manuals.”

Tim sits back and eyes Kevin for a moment. “I’m beginning to think those exiles only taught you about their insurgency.” Kevin shakes his head slowly, “I shared that background with you to emphasize why we should reposition our line-of-sight FM repeaters. I can’t believe you’re fixated on how the Haitians in Miami run their own licensed radio station. We called it pirate radio as a joke. Just because Gustavo’s a Haitian journalist doesn’t make him a criminal.” Tim shakes his head, “I don’t care about any of that. But his reporting did real damage to some of the station’s supporters here and in the US.”

Kevin wipes his forehead with the back of his arm, removes his eyeglasses, and tries to clean them with his sweaty t shirt. He puts them back on before replying, “I can work with you or anyone without having to agree on politics. But that doesn’t mean I’ll condone labor violations just because a pastor or missionary is involved.” Tim’s face is red now, “Well, of course no one is asking you to do that. But as a news outlet, we can’t have staff mixing their personal politics with the mission. I don’t want to hear about Miami or how you arrived here with so many contacts. I’m asking you to hurry up and learn Creole so you can do your job. We don’t have enough technical staff to cover the work without you.” Kevin nods slowly, “That’s exactly my

point and it's not a statement against capitalism. The station's finances won't be stable and the equipment can't be maintained properly without the local staff doing the technical work. Rather than paying for consultants like me, wouldn't a few pay raises help with staff retention? Tim snorts, "Oh, sure. Then I'll have every other employer down here angry at me for raising wages! Just do your job and let me worry about managing the staff." Tim stands up, signaling the meeting is over "See you at the house later."

Missionaries

Iron Market, Downtown

Tim and Kevin are leaving the Iron Market, where Tim has introduced him to a North African merchant who will exchange US dollars for Haitian gourdes. Kevin's immigration status is murky, so he can't open any bank accounts. NGO Tech isn't recognized by the Haitian government anyway, so they channel funds to Kevin through his US checking account. The Haitian banks charge a 20% fee for any foreign currency exchange, plus taxes and mandatory "tips". As a result, local custom is to rely on the black market for currency exchange. Even when using a personal check, Kevin will receive 90% of the official exchange rate from this North African man. While Kevin doesn't fully understand all the signals, it's clear that he's being inducted into some sort of unspoken arrangement where collateral has already been exchanged.

Tim is pulling a luggage wagon, stacked full of marine batteries, lanterns, water containers of all sizes, and several gallons of flat black paint. Kevin is lugging along a 5-gallon jerrycan filled with kerosene, the lid leaking badly. They maneuver around piles of coconuts, hand-made leather work, and colorful paintings. Swarms of naked children chase each other while their older friends use the distraction to thief a few loaves of bread. Women glide by in brightly colored dresses, balancing piles of textiles and baskets on their heads.

Taking care to not to knock over any merchant stalls, they make their way back to the Isuzu. It's parked on a side street, where Tim paid a street kid to watch it. They round a corner and Kevin recognizes the kid's Montreal Expos shirt in the shadows behind their SUV. The kid sees

them coming, nods to Tim, and disappears into the crowd. As they load the Trooper Kevin asks, “When are you going to let me use the station’s Lada?” Tim doesn’t reply, so he continues, “Why isn’t anyone using it. It’s not half as rusty as the other SUV’s?” Tim quickly replies, “I don’t know where that Russian eye-sore came from. No one can read the gauges or start it. We’d sell it for parts, but not even the Cubans want it.”

They get in the Isuzu and Kevin reaches for the seat belt out of habit, before rolling down his window instead. As they leave the market area, they approach a make-shift checkpoint manned by a lone soldier. Kevin asks, “Whatever happened to that missionary family that lives down the street? I haven’t seen them since that firefight the other night. I can’t believe no rounds come through the house.” Tim interrupts him, “And maybe you shouldn’t stand on the roof while people are shooting at each other!” Kevin gives him a “fair point” facial expression before continuing, “Was it connected to the Americans disappearing?” Tim doesn’t respond as he waves his press pass at the soldier. The soldier stares at Tim for a moment without expression, before waving him past with a dismissive gesture.

As they start moving Tim doesn’t respond so Kevin continues, “I mean, I get that the zenglando are basically just the next version of Macoute, but why do so many of these dechokaj events target either the Catholic hierarchy or old-school American missionaries? You’ve been explaining that the only safe way to preach the gospel is by avoiding politics. Then why have so many Christians been caught up in this political conflict?”

Finally Tim sighs and replies, “Kevin, no offense, but you don’t have enough Creole to understand what you’re hearing on the radio. I don’t know what you think you’re getting from those newspapers. You can barely read French. Of course...” Tim swerves to avoid a man pulling a wooden cart full of barrels. “Of course it’s messy. Voodoo, Kevin. Demonic powers. This is spiritual warfare. We’ve been saying it for years, so of course they’re coming after the missionaries. This country deserves all its suffering until they let go of their superstitions, reject communism, and accept help from the US! And yeah, the Lavalas mobs went after the Archbishop. The Catholic hierarchy is all that remains between Haiti and total anarchy.”

Kevin lights a cigarette and replies, “Well that, the CIA, and whatever else the US Embassy is cooking up.” Tim jerks in his seat and glances sharply at Kevin, then makes a show of waving away the cigarette smoke. Kevin continues, “Of course Haitian Catholicism absorbed some

African folk spirituality into its saints and holidays. Doesn't make it idolatry or whatever." Tim suddenly jolts upright, "Are you trying to defend voodoo?!" Kevin sighs, "I'm not defending anything. I'm saying it doesn't seem that different than Christmas being in December with a Yule log and lots of fir trees. That's not in the Bible either." Still no response from Tim, so Kevin pushes more, "Those leftists you're worried about? Are they the ones running the Mother Teresa orphanage? Or the Fathers who are reminding everyone that Jesus was a brown-skinned, poor refugee, too?"

Now Tim pulls the Isuzu abruptly to the side of the road, angrily pulls the emergency brake, and turns his body toward Kevin. "You read a lot of books and met a lot of exiles in Miami." He leans in, so close now that Kevin can smell the street-pork that Tim ate at the market. "You might think it's all fun and games, but your name has found its way to the Embassy. You think human rights are more important than law and order?" He snorts, "Those of us who have been here more than a minute, know better." He snatches the cigarette from Kevin's hand and throws it past his face out the passenger window before continuing, "This is a godforsaken place. Until Haiti bends the knee to God Almighty, they get all that they deserve. And you will too if you're not careful."

Kevin breathes out slowly and stares into Tim's eyes. Neither blinking. Then both snap out of it at the same time. Kevin replies, "Look. Here's the thing. I'm still here to help. You're not the first customer to shoot the messenger because he didn't like the message. I may not have Creole yet or understand what all these foreigners are doing down here, but I know bullshit when I step in it." They pass a Kok Kalite mural with fighting rooster above the phrase, "Ansamn, Ansamn, nou se Lavalas!". Kevin gestures toward it, "Like the sign says, 'Together we're the avalanche!'. But who gets washed away? Before I came down here, I was told that every priest is progressive and every pastor is conservative until proven otherwise." Kevin gestures toward the Bible on the seat between them. "It's been a while since we talked about anything in there but Paul's letters. Well, I was taught that the Bible may or may not be infallible, but you better not try to use it against the poor."

Tim slowly restarts the Isuzu and gets back on the road. "I think it's best we table this for now. It's been a long day and you need to get back to your language classes. That's still a condition of you getting access to any of the station's vehicles. You can keep using the Yamaha for back and forth to wherever you go. I just don't want to know about it." He looks over at

Kevin, “Kompran?” Kevin replies, “Tout sanble.” They pull up to Tim’s gate, just as all the lights go out in his house. The gate opens to the sound of his kids wailing that their TV/VCR just shut off. Kevin looks Tim in the eye and says, “I’m going to let you handle those batteries. It’s been a long day, and I need to practice my Creole phrases before my lesson tomorrow.”

Carrefour

Kevin begins to spend more of his time at the AM station in Carrefour. The area is growing rapidly as Haitians migrate into the Port-au-Prince urban sprawl. Economic conditions and Macoute attacks have driven farmers and laborers out of the provinces. The population of Carrefour was a crucial part of President Aristide’s election victory. But there were irregularities during the ballot counts and a run-off election is needed for a few down-ballot races. While Radio Protestant doesn’t allow political ads on air, they made the station available as a polling place during the general election.

One day while Kevin is working with a Haitian technician named Jè, there’s a commotion in the studio’s office area. They decide to see what’s going on. When they enter the office area, Kevin sees a handful of Haitians in the hallway negotiating with Tim. The lead negotiator is a young Haitian woman, who has excellent English and is speaking calmly and firmly. Kevin can’t hear everything she’s saying because Tim is raising his voice, “I’m sorry Ms. Baptiste, we made the station available for the general election only. It’s just not possible to open the station for another weekend. We don’t have enough staff on hand.” Ms. Baptiste looks at Tim silently for a long while, saying nothing. Finally, Tim continues, “I understand how important the run-off elections are and would love to help, but I just can’t see a way to do it.”

Kevin watches as Ms. Baptiste confers with the group of Haitians. They all seem to be deferring to a man who’s standing toward the back of the group, dressed in olive colored fatigue pants, black boots, and dark green t-shirt. Their brief huddle complete, Ms. Baptiste turns back to Tim. Kevin notices the man in the green t-shirt step away from the group and slip outside before he can see his face clearly. Ms. Baptiste continues, “We’re not representing any candidate. But we are working with the international community to make sure there are observers for the run-offs.” She pulls out a bundle of documents and holds them so Tim can see, “The agreement you made with the Government of Haiti states that your station will be available for the general

election AND run-offs. I understand it's inconvenient but it's not optional. If you don't make the station available, someone will need to explain that and since you signed the agreement, that's you."

Tim replies, "If we need to get the lawyers involved, we can, but that won't be until next week. I don't know what else to say. I can't open the station to the public this weekend without staff to make sure our equipment doesn't disappear." Kevin glances at Jè, who's been listening carefully to Tim. Jè just rolls his eyes at Kevin and shrugs. Since the conversation seems to be at a stalemate, Kevin clears his throat, "I could be at the station this weekend to make sure nothing disappears." Ms. Baptiste's mouth shows a brief smile before she regains her composure and turns to Tim, "Sounds like we might have a solution." Tim stares at Kevin, his face showing irritation, "Fine. But Kevin, I'm holding you accountable if anything disappears. And keep everyone out of my office!"

On run-off election day, Ms. Baptiste arrives to make sure the polling place is open. She's not allowed inside without an observer, so Kevin walks her inside to meet a few Haitian poll watchers. Everyone is focused on their work, so there's not much time for small talk. But during a break, Kevin learns that one of the poll workers is related to his pirate radio friend, Gustavo. They share stories and laugh about some jokes he's told them both.

While Kevin expected his presence to be a formality, he does need to perform his actual role as election observer. About halfway through the day, poll workers are swapping full ballot boxes for empty new ones when a worker finds that a new "empty" box is already filled with completed ballots. Kevin watches the workers call over the election judge, remove the fraudulent ballots, and fan them out across the floor. Kevin photographs them before the ballots are gathered and locked in a briefcase by the election judge. The election judge attaches a seal across the briefcase. The judge, poll workers sign as local Haitian witnesses and Kevin signs as official international observer. Kevin reports this all to Tim the next week. But Tim's only response is, "It's all a waste of time. These people will never understand democracy as anything but a tribal conflict."

Tim's House

It's getting late in the afternoon. The tropical sun and ever-present dust cast a soft glow across the kitchen. Kevin is preparing a pot of coffee, while Nadine finishes the evening meal of rice, beans, and a delicious sauce. Kevin asks her, "What's the recipe for that sauce?" Nadine chuckles, "Nice try. I'm not sharing that with you!". Kevin laughs, "Well, it was worth another try. But I promise, I'd keep it a secret, just like your coffee technique!" They're laughing as Martha joins them, "Nadine, shouldn't you be on your way to pick up your kids? I'll finish up here so you can get them before dark." Nadine thanks Martha, gathers her things, and says to Kevin, "Don't leave a mess in my kitchen after you're finished with that coffee." Kevin grins and walks her to the door, where he says quietly, "Thanks for everything. Take care of yourself!" Nadine looks at him with curiosity, "Going somewhere?" Kevin smiles, "It's always possible!"

After Nadine leaves, Kevin returns to the kitchen and asks, "When does Nadine get to spend time with her family? Seems like she's always here." Martha pauses before replying carefully, "Nadine knows her kids are safe at school while she's working, which is more than most Haitian mothers can say." Kevin replies quickly, "I didn't mean it as a criticism. I know the Mission provides a good education for the local kids. I guess it just seems unfair that Nadine has to make so many sacrifices to educate her children." Martha looks at Kevin with a small smile, "There you go again... You're right though. It's not fair that Haiti doesn't have a public education system. I can't change that, but I do what I can to help Nadine. My priority is the safety of this family. I can't solve Haiti's problems but God helps those who help themselves."

Kevin nods his head slowly, "I see your point..." Tim calls to Kevin from the front porch, "Where's that coffee? Let's finish this up!" Martha's face breaks into a smile, "Sounds like you have some work to do out there." Kevin joins Tim on the porch, pours coffee into their cups, and adds some condensed milk to his own. Tim takes a sip, wipes his mustache, and continues their conversation. "I really need you out in Ceyes next week to get your blessing from local leadership. Then you can get some real work done up on Mount Boeffe." Tim pauses just long enough to see if Kevin will reply, but with no reaction continues, "I would have sent you up there already except you won't get halfway without security and Haitian muscle. Which I can't get until you fix this mess between the local board and your NGO."

Again, the careful pause, the almost eye contact, then straightening his back, Tim begins to speak very forcefully, jabbing the air with his pen for emphasis, “Frankly, I’m beginning to question both the motivation and ability of all involved!”. He quickly looks over his shoulder toward the living room where his daughters are practicing piano and violin. Then he lowers his voice to a more conversational tone, “I know you’re a good guy. My kids like you.” Tim takes an almost fatherly tone, “But you are walking a dangerous line and need to decide who you serve. I need team players. Are we clear?”

Very slowly, as if taking care not to spill a drop of coffee from the empty cup, Kevin places the delicate, china cup and saucer onto the porch table. “I’m not sure we are. I wish our boards would have sorted their mission statements out before I arrived. You have me locked down here in Delmas, surrounded by Americans who can’t speak Creole and are afraid to go downtown. Now you ask why I haven’t already gone out to the provinces? To negotiate my way out of the crisis you created when you censored my mail and shared a bunch of out-of-context notes with the pastors?”

Kevin leans back, and carefully exhales, allowing some of the intensity to bleed from his voice. “The only social contact I have is with the station staff, who only want to improve their English. Or whoever is in the car during the two-hour commute back and forth each day. Or whoever is at the Mission Church when I can hitch a ride there and back.” Then very softly, Kevin adds “I might have been born at night, but not last night. If you think this is the first time I’ve been setup to fail, you didn’t read my file. You brought up your daughters, not me. But since we’re on that topic... I can’t imagine what you think is going to happen to them if all your dire predictions about Aristide come true.”

Tim freezes, his eyes seeming to see Kevin for the first time. He slowly asks, “What exactly are you saying?” Kevin responds evenly, “I’m here on loan to your board. You can’t fire me because I’m independently funded and have air cover at the national level. And if you do, I’ll just go work with the Catholic stations. You know all this and we’ve had this conversation before. I’m here to help whoever needs it, as long as they’re not hurting anyone. Everything else is just noise. What exactly is the problem here?”

The music from the next room has stopped. Everyone except Tim and Kevin are now at the far end of the house in the kitchen, noisily clanging pots and pans. Both men sit back in their

chairs and regard the other, waiting to see who will go first and lose. Kevin starts to fish out a pack of local cigarettes knowing that Tim cannot stand the smell of their smoke, but since they're on the porch, can't really say anything either. Kevin then takes off his glasses and carefully examines them for dust, before wiping something away. He takes out a wooden match and starts to strike it against his boot. Before Kevin can get the dilapidated cigarette lit, Tim suddenly stands up and says, "Listen. I don't have time to debate this with you. You're paid for through the summer, and you're not my responsibility. You're a liability. So that gives me a few months to get something in return for my trouble. One way or the other, I need you up on that peak and down again with all your gear and that tower at full power. Or up on that peak with a month's worth of supplies and a short-wave life-line to me until that happens. Or until you die trying."

Tim is standing fully upright now, his voice at sermon volume, his eyes staring into Kevin's. "You're a leaf in the wind with no allegiances? Good for you. You signed on the line that was dotted. You said you knew the deal. We both know you came in here naked as a whore, without K&R, logistics, or any physical security. You won't even report in at the US Embassy." He throws his hands up in frustration, "Now I'm trying to explain you down there while also trying to run a radio station. You want to play power games? Fine. Show me what you got. Figure out how to negotiate through the mess your leftist friends made for you in Ceyes. Or don't. But be someplace else until the end of summer, while I decide what to do with you. Now, get it done!"

Kevin slowly stands up and faces Tim, "I have accountability to my NGO and the folks back home who support me. I won't quit the assignment or take back my commitment to the Haitian staff. Unless you make it impossible for me to continue." Tim's eyeing Kevin carefully now, as if sensing this isn't a negotiation. Kevin doesn't raise his voice but it becomes firmer, "But I will continue to voice my concerns about your programming and coziness with the military regimes. My NGO simply will not involve itself in any shenanigans with the US Embassy. I can't explain those letters to Radio Protestant from the US Agencies and Generals. Maybe you should explain them to the Haitian pastors. That's nowhere in my job description. I'll find a way to sort out Mount Boeffe and then I'll find a place to live in Carrefour. That way I won't waste time commuting from the fancy part of town to where I work."

Tim suddenly appears to notice that Martha and his daughters are standing at the kitchen doorway, listening closely. Kevin finishes stuffing his notebook into his overstuffed backpack

and continues, “I won’t beg you for a lift. I’ll hitch rides or use public transport until my home team can pull together enough cash for a car.” They hear a horn toot from the street outside. Kevin glances outside and turns back to Tim, “That’s a friend of a friend who’s going to help me get my stuff stowed until I’m situated.”

Tim takes a deep breath but Kevin cuts him off with a raised palm. “Before you start hurling your boss-speak at me, I want to say one last thing. And you can quote me. I didn’t just fall off the turnip truck and arrive at the airport in the middle of a coup attempt. I’ve had a lot of training in relevant things. That’s why YOUR board invited me to this party. You may be an expert on how things worked when the Duvalierists and their Macoutes ran this place. But you might want to ask yourself whether this house will withstand a dechokaj. That press pass won’t save you or anyone if Lavalas decides you’re the problem. And believe me, if they knew what I know, you’d already be sitting in the rubble.”

Now Tim’s face is ashen, and Martha gasps, Kevin looks at Tim’s wife and young daughters and says to them quietly, “You took me in, fed me, and played music with me. This thing has nothing to do with you. I’m not passing anything on to anyone about this conversation or the other things I know. I don’t have a dog in this clash of empires. But Mission Church has great music, so I really do hope to see you up there at the next Talent Show.”

Without waiting for any acknowledgement from Tim, Kevin opens the front door and drags his footlocker onto the porch. “You do what you need to do but it changes nothing for me. Decisions will be made above my pay grade. I just do my job and pass along information to others who might understand what I can’t. I’ve already sent another personal report to family and church back home.” Tim opens his mouth to speak, but Kevin cuts him off, “I know you said you need to censor my mail, but I’m not speaking on behalf of you or the station. Never was my assignment. Sorry there was so much confusion.”

Kevin’s ride is waiting outside in a primer-gray, Land Cruiser pickup truck with a rusted camper cab. He smiles in relief when he sees Ashley at the wheel. She grins back at him with a raised eyebrow and asks, “Sake pase?!” Kevin closes the door to Tim’s house behind him, laughs and replies “M’a boule!”

ACT II – FORMING

PART THREE: REBELLION

Networks

February 1991

Delmas Highway

Kevin opens the camper shell and heaves his footlocker up into the truck's bed. He walks to the passenger side with his backpack and climbs in. A young Haitian woman slides across to the middle of the bench seat to make room. She's holding a notebook and large Algebra textbook in her lap. Kevin says to her, "Komo o ye? Mwen se Kevin." Her mouth twitches into a smile and she replies in perfect English, "Hi Kevin, my name is Jocelyn. How are you?" Kevin's eyebrows jump in surprise before he starts to laugh, "Your English is perfect! I'll stop torturing you with my horrible Creole!" Jocelyn raises an eyebrow before replying with a smile, "It's not so bad." Ashley tries to stifle a chuckle and they all laugh together.

Jocelyn returns to her formulas as Ashley backs the rig into an impossible three-point turn. She avoids a few street urchins who go to great lengths to pantomime how close they came to death due to her reckless driving. In response, Ashley rolls down the window and starts bantering with them in rapid Creole that Kevin can't quite follow. But before long, everyone is laughing and the kids are in the truck bed and on top of the camper shell. They shout and wave at surprised pedestrians who can't quite fit together what they're seeing. Ashley casually maneuvers the over-sized truck through the scrum and onto Delmas, holding a stately pace as she drives her traveling circus down the mountain toward the Big Top.

When they're merged with traffic Ashley asks, "So, did they fire you for thought crimes?" Kevin chuckles, "Kind of difficult, when they don't pay me in the first place." Ashley snaps back, "Colonizers. Am I right?!" They roar in laughter as the Haitian kids lean in the little window between camper shell and driver cab to see what's going on. Jocelyn smiles at the joke but continues working in her notebook. Ashley points at Kevin and says "Gro neg!" as the

laughter erupts again. Kevin laughs along, sprinkling in a few Creole phrases in an exaggerated cowboy drawl.

Ashley catches her breath from laughing, closes the window to the kids in the truck bed, and gives Jocelyn a soft nudge. She flashes a quick hand signal to her, points at Kevin and mouths “OK?” Kevin looks away but watches from the corner of his eye as Jocelyn gives a quick nod in response. Ashley asks Kevin, “OK, seriously. What’s your play here? You’re welcome to crash at our place but that’s not a long-term plan.” Kevin exhales slowly, “What did I step into here? It’s escalated much faster than expected... I’m amazed our mutual friends received my coded message and got you here on time!” Ashley laughs, “I think you’re referring to MY friends but you might make the team!” Kevin chuckles, “Well, it wouldn’t be the first time I was voted off an island.” He thinks for a moment more, “How about this? Drop me off at Mother Mary’s guest house near the Cathedral. I’ll stow my stuff, explain the situation to the priests, then make my way to Miragoane by tap-tap and find your place. Can’t be that difficult to find a house full of blan!”

As she wedges the Toyota into the left-turn lane, Ashley is quiet until the horns stop blaring. “Not a bad plan. When you get to Miragoane, just go to the police station and ask where the blan live. They all know.” She glances over at Kevin, “But you’re going to get out there by tap-tap, with your Creole?!” Just then, a garishly decorated camion nearly takes off the driver-side mirror. Kevin shifts in his seat nervously, “Well, OK, good point. But I can read a map. From downtown Port-au-Prince, it’s just due west through Carrefour. Worst case, I can hand-signal my way there but really? Show up at the police station and hope for the best?”

Ashley grins, “OK, settle down. It’s Miragoane, not Port-au-Prince. Our police are basically just a local club or fraternity. They don’t care what anyone does as long as it doesn’t interfere with the cartel trade. Our port is only built for fishing boats.” She makes air quotes, “The Government of Haiti ignores the whole Southern province unless there’s an uprising. But no plans for that right now!” They grin and spontaneously sing as if in a choir, “Because THAT would be wrong!”, then laugh uncontrollably for a few seconds. Ashley continues, “How about one tweak. I drop you in the vicinity of the Cathedral and then forget where that Mother Mary safe house is. Then I have plausible deniability. How do I know what you did after I dropped you off? I assumed you were going to get some Dominican chicken.”

Kevin smiles, “I read all the LeCarre novels and World War 2 resistance manuals. What were you reading?!” Without skipping a beat, Ashley replies “Banned books of course!” Kevin breaks into a huge grin, “You mean like 1984, Politics of Jesus, and War Against the Poor?!” With a sly grin, she replies “Sure. That’s a good start. Plus some Chomsky and Sun Tzu. But if you connect with those liberation theology base communities? Get some language fluency and useful skills from those guys? You’ll be in the REAL game!”

Ashley pulls the Land Cruiser to a stop in front of the gleaming National Cathedral. Kevin steps out of the truck with his backpack while the gaggle of street kids clamor down from the pickup bed. They’re joined by another swarm of kids from the Cathedral Park. There’s a bit of shouting and turf-explaining until everyone decides to see if the blan will hand over some cash. Ashley’s way ahead of this game. She’s already pulling away from the scene as Kevin is surrounded by a sea of dirty faces asking for ti kob. But Kevin has one good Creole phrase that never fails. It acknowledges the kids but also sets a fair boundary. He can’t pretend that he CANNOT help because of course he could. But neither can he help all of them. “M pa gen anye pou ou.” Delivered correctly, it stops any further discussion. Then he begins dragging his footlocker up the hill toward Mother Mary’s safe house.

Mother Mary of Our Eternal Peace

Since he’s arrived after 3 pm, Kevin is given a small cubicle with cot and wash basin for the night. Aside from a chair, table and ash tray, not a lot else. But in a safe place with God’s angels watching over him, he sleeps like a baby. The next morning, he joins the priests and nuns for a cup of coffee and communal smoke. Kevin is carrying a tray of coffee mugs, when an older Haitian priest steps into the dining area. His hair is cut close to his scalp and his short beard is flecked with gray. The priest scans the room until he sees Kevin and walks toward him with a smile. Kevin’s face brightens when he sees the priest, “Oh, oh! Father Vitor! I thought you were andeyo.” A passing nun smiles and takes the tray, while the two men embrace.

With a slap on Kevin’s back, Father Vitor breaks the bear hug, “Glad to see Ashley got you here last night. She has a rare ability to gather wayward blan.” Kevin laughs and replies, “Well, thanks for connecting the dots for me. All this time, I thought Ashley was Gustavo’s tape recording source. But you’ve been pulling strings all the way to Miami this whole time!” They

laugh together while Fr. Vitor helps Kevin carry his footlocker and backpack upstairs to a large bunk room and shared living space. After inventorying his foot locker's contents with the priest, Kevin receives a little ticket and his foot locker is safely secured.

Then Father Vitor asks Kevin, "Is there anything sensitive about your situation? Anything that could cause scrutiny by the authorities?" Kevin pauses and then replies that he can't think of anything new. Then Fr. Vitor asks, "What about the Americans at the radio station. You're quite exposed if you stay there. Are you sure it's safe? The base communities could use your skills to get their radio network online. Maybe it's time to get out from under those pastors." Kevin looks thoughtful and then replies, "I think it's worth the calculated risk. I do have a few friends at the station, and their board can't walk back those letters. I've closed that whole discussion with the American station manager. He can explain his programming decisions to the Haitian pastors and I'll stay focused on the transmitter outage. That's all they really care about and it's what I'm supposed to be doing down here anyway." Father Vitor bursts into laughter, "You've already taken enough liberties with the station and your NGO!" Kevin laughs along, "Right?! Who knew it would be a bad idea to let me off my leash?"

Father Vitor laughs and takes a cigarette from Kevin's pack on the table. "I can't believe you smoke these local things!" But he lights up anyway as Kevin shrugs, "It's not a matter of taste. I just won't pay ten times as much for stale Marlboros." Fr Vitor takes a deep drag and slowly exhales into the ceiling fan, "You're not really off the leash though, are you?" Kevin's grin fades as Father Vitor continues, "But it is a very long one... What if you stay at the station as their necessary evil? They've already exiled you to Mount Boeffe, so it can't get much worse. Maybe it will buy your NGO some time to put a good spin on things. I could connect you with a base community near there and they could help you instead of the pastors."

Kevin begins nodding, "I like it. Hiding in plain sight... But I'll need a LOT of gear." Father Vitor smiles broadly, "I'll give you contact details and directions to the Ti Legliz community. They'll be able to provide security and as many hands as you need. Maybe you can add a solar repeater for their radio network." Kevin's face shows visible relief as he replies, "That'll allow things settle at the station. The wrong people would follow me to the community if I went there now."

They finalize a few details before joining the rest of the house for a lunch of beans over mayin moulin. After the meal, everyone joins in to clean up the empty plates and serving trays. Kevin asks, “Why do you eat mayin moulin instead of rice? I thought rice is what goes with beans.” Father Vitor suppresses a grin and glances at one of the younger brothers. “Well, why is that?” The younger man smiles broadly and replies without hesitation, “Because rice needs to be imported. What we grow in the Artibonite is stolen by the Macoutes. But we can grow corn anywhere. And the upper classes refuse to eat mayin moulin because it’s peasant food. So there’s always enough for the rest of us!” With that, hugs and two-cheek kisses are exchanged, and Kevin leaves Mother Mary’s Eternal Peace with his backpack, a handheld tape recorder, a pocket full of gourdes, and a blessed mission from God.

Downtown, Iron Market

It’s late afternoon and hot, but the sun sets quickly this time of year and the roadside is shaded. Kevin meanders downhill, following the merchants in reverse as they make their way back up the mountain with empty baskets on their heads. He arrives at the Iron Market, a massive indoor/outdoor market that never really sleeps. Kevin wanders around for a while, deflecting the half-hearted high ball offers from vendors who’ve already sold their best wares.

A grizzled old Haitian man offers him a machete for the equivalent of five US dollars. Kevin looks closely at the hand-stitched leather scabbard. He wonders if he could carry it as a tool instead of a weapon, but declines before the man can offer a lower price. Kevin asks in his halting Creole, “Ki kote tap-tap Miragoane?” His ridiculous accent seems to catch the old guy off guard, who just points toward the nearest tap-tap. Kevin thanks him and approaches the loading area.

He approaches the nearest tap-tap, a small Toyota pickup adorned with brightly painted images of Jesus, Kok Kalite, and Aristide. It’s gotten quite dark by now, and Kevin walks carefully through the loading area as the small trucks drive in every direction. Their headlights are off, since the drivers have convinced themselves that illuminated headlights reduce fuel efficiency. Kevin recalls Fritz explaining how dangerous it is to be a pedestrian around dawn and dusk. He also emphasized that Donkeys don’t have headlights and always get right of way. THAT is non-negotiable, especially for someone on a motorbike.

After joining the jostling group near the first tap-tap in line, Kevin sees that a dozen adults and small children are already stuffed inside. A couple teenage boys are hanging onto hand rails on the outside of the cab. Kevin accepts the situation, wedges himself into the elbows and thighs until he has a spot on the wooden bench inside. Many of the people in the tap-tap have been performing manual labor all day, so the air is pungent with a mix of body odor, garlic, and the fried pork that many have brought along as a snack. The good news; no matter how bad the driver, Kevin cannot be thrown free of the truck in an accident. “Safety First!”, as he was taught.

Only in country a few months, Kevin is already accustomed to stares from Haitians. To be fair, it’s very uncommon for an American to travel by tap-tap so he can’t blame the locals for being surprised to see him. There’s an uncomfortable silence as the tap-tap starts moving, while a few dozen eyes stare at him. The facial expressions range from impassive to slightly annoyed. Finally, Kevin clears his throat and with an apologetic grin says, “Sake pase?” That seems to do the trick and smiles break out among the group. He hears the word *blan* more than *fou* and his fellow passengers seem to be having quite a bit of fun at his expense. That’s OK. He’d rather be a source of comedy than anger, so he smiles and nods along. His novelty soon wears off and the passengers settle into the ride, swaying against each other without apology.

Kevin can’t see much from his seat well inside the cab. Under his breath, he mutters, “Note to self. Be the last person into a tap-tap, not the first.” They stop occasionally when a passenger slaps the roof of the cab. But for every person who gets off another always seems to get on. Kevin loses track of time but they finally arrive in Miragoane a few hours after dark. The tap-tap stops in front of the local police station as Ashley told him to expect. Kevin climbs over the other passengers, “Excuse” “Pardon, moi!”, while holding tightly onto his backpack. He makes his way out of the vehicle in front of the police station, and tries to get his bearings while elaborately and luxuriously stretching his back and neck. That wooden bench seat was not built for comfort.

Protect and Serve

Mirogoane, Police Station

Kevin's quite anxious about approaching the police station, despite his measured bravado with Ashley. He's starting to question this whole plan. But he can't lose his nerve now. When does the last tap-tap return to Carrefour each night? And where would he go anyway? He tries to remember yesterday's headline from Le Nouvelliste. Which side is the US on? Which side are these cops on? Which side is he on? Shouldn't he know that?

But none of that really matters here in the pitch dark with nothing but a generator and single bulb illuminating four pairs of dark glasses and matching gun barrels. An endless supply of contradictory rumors have everyone confused. "Lavalas has been taken over by communists" and "Macoutes sleeper agents are popping up in churches" or "the Pope has sent troops!" However, an American is always an American and not to be trifled with, even in this dust speck of tropical paradise. Those creepy Macoute cops don't know what he is either, but they know where the blan live. Time to do the brilliant, ballsy, bullshit thing. Kevin starts to hum, "Take it to the limit, one more time..."

He straightens his back, fumbles around with his backpack, digs a pack of smokes out of his pocket, drops them, picks them up, pats all his pockets for a box of matches, finds them, uses three to get a flame and then accidentally lets it burn out. No reaction from the cops. So he makes a show of sighing in frustration, lights the cigarette again, drags it deep to get a good coal going and mutters "Once more God, if you're still there." Then he adjusts his crotch situation and slowly walks toward the door and the flickering sunglasses and gun metal waiting inside. When he's a few meters away from the police station he calls, "Ki kote kay blan?" There's no reaction from the cops. He's about to take his first step inside when he hears a female voice call out, "Hey blan!" He turns and sees Ashley with her permanently ironic grin, "Glad you could make it. You're not in Kansas anymore!"

Ashley's house

It's very late or early the next morning. Kevin, Ashley, and Matt are lounging on bamboo mats atop the house's flat roof, looking up at the stars, and sharing war stories. They work for NGO Education, a faith-adjacent non-profit that supports the education of young women. Since every family must pay for private education, tuition for girls is usually an expense that a family cuts. NGO Education has built a network of schools for girls throughout Haiti. This seems harmless enough and is great for fund-raising but teaching a young woman to read and write is a revolutionary act.

Over rum, cane sugar, and coconut cocktails, Ashley and Matt explain expansively that NGO Education isn't aligned with any organized political or religious groups. While the NGO is US-based, the boots-on-the-ground are a band of UN misfits. Kevin asks, "But who funds you? It's not like there are grants out there for any of this." Ashley laughs, "Well, we're ecumenical enough to coordinate with any faith-based mobilization." Matt snorts and interjects, "Yeah, mate. But also feminist enough to make the Yank fundajelicals uneasy and vague enough to confuse the US Embassy." Kevin grins mischievously, "Yeah, I've seen how much the missionaries and alphabet agencies love when someone goes off script." Ashley exclaims, "Exactly! They can't even conceptualize our motives." Matt adds, "Ask forgiveness later, maybe" works in a failed state like this one. With so many rival clans and warlords, a truly impartial back channel to the US can be helpful to everyone."

Kevin had connected with Matt and Ashley at one of the crazy house parties that spring up whenever the right combo of hippy/outlaw/NGO/left-wing types find themselves together with not much better to do after the lights go out. This two-story house with secure courtyard can easily sleep a dozen Americans or a small Haitian village. They're on permanent assignment and will be in country for another year or five, depending on funding. They jokingly refer to this house as the Miragoane Stronghold. It's rent costs a fraction of the up-scale apartments that the missionary wives keep recommending.

Ashley has been in Haiti long enough to absorb the local blend of French, African, and American culture. She's perfected the Gaelic shrug and buys all her clothes at the local market. While most blan women seem uncomfortable in their "missionary dresses", Ashley moves and blends in comfortably with her Haitian style of dress.

Matt is Australian. He's in his late twenties and is big. Not fat, just a large man with light brown hair pulled back into a shaggy combination of samurai bun and Cheech & Chong pony tail. He has a loud voice with a very obvious Aussie accent and is impossible to ignore. With all the anti-American energy around the country, he wears a vest with an Australian flag on front and hand written message on back, "M pa Amerikan. M Australian!" This distinction is lost on most Haitians. As their national song proclaims, "Ayiti cherie, pi belle peyi, pase lot peyis!" Their most beloved and beautiful Haiti, anywhere else, and the US which might as well be the moon.

He's former military of some sort and has been assigned to Mirogoane for "male energy" security. It endlessly irritates him that if the shit hits the fan for real, he's going to need a damn Yank to get him in the US Embassy because Australia doesn't have one here. Well really, he'll need Ashley to bat her lashes at the embassy Marines. She's already gotten them each to buy her drinks at the Montana Hotel. There's a saying in Creole, "Tout blan sanble". Matt needs to keep his head on a swivel like the rest of the Americans because a dechokaj mob is unlikely to read the fine print.

When Kevin arrived earlier, he recognized Jocelyn from Ashley's pickup truck; lighting kerosene lanterns and setting out carafes of filtered water. Ashley now explains that Jocelyn stays in the NGO house and helps with cleaning and cooking. Kevin is still not comfortable with the class implications or how easily Americans become accustomed to "the help" they could never afford back home. But all the blan and Haitians hire domestic help. Blan who don't hire a Haitian maid are considered to be miserly and mean. Unless one's project is to perform manual housekeeping in Haiti, it's much more sensible for an American to hire domestic help. It's also one of the few legal sources of income for many Haitians, as Kevin will later explain to the NGO bean counters. Thanks to Tim's attempt to censor Kevin's mail and the resulting panic back home, there are some who suspect he's down here building either a plantation or a guerilla army.

When the conversation on the roof pauses, Kevin says, "I'll eventually need a maid. How did you find Jocelyn? Did someone recommend her?" Ashley hesitates before replying, "We met her during our first project and she started working for us soon after. It's a long story but she doesn't have many other options. She's been a huge help in so many ways." Ashley goes down the ladder to replenish supplies on the roof. While she's downstairs Matt adds, "Since we run schools for

Haitian kids, Jocelyn is able to get a free education. But even better, she's become a tutor for the younger kids who are struggling with math. She has a safe place to stay with a few clueless blan, and doesn't need to deal with what goes on behind the market stalls." Ashley is yelling up about the corkscrew and he calls back with exaggerated accent, "Aye, Sheila. It's up here with the shrimp on the barbie!"

Ashley returns to the roof with two more wine bottles and they chat idly while looking up at the sky. Throughout the night, they pause conversation to listen to the occasional sound of gunfire. Kevin is debating caliber of round and rifle vs shotgun, when Matt starts talking about his Australian military service in a police action Kevin's never heard of. They drift briefly into the pacifism, non-violence, self-defense lane but lose interest as the boom and pop of weaponry continues. They decide the gunfire isn't getting closer, so they doze and smoke and drink until the sun starts to rise and the neighborhood roosters demand that everyone get up and present themselves.

Jocelyn has already made coffee and has it waiting in the courtyard, along with Laughing Cow cheese and fresh-baked croissants from the home bakery across the alley. But most importantly, there are cold jugs of purified water. Not ice cold, but much cooler than room temperature. As they recover from last night's party and finish their coffee, Jocelyn mentions that no water is coming from the faucets. The tank on the roof is empty and now there's no running water in the house. Ashley thanks her and announces, "Time to get the buckets out." Matt and Jocelyn join her, pulling full buckets of water from underneath counters. They place them in the bathroom, kitchen, courtyard. Ashley grabs a sponge and small pail, which she fills from the courtyard bucket. Then she turns toward a wall and pulls her t-shirt over her head. Kevin, Matt, and Jocelyn do the same, turning toward a different courtyard wall. They wash away the previous night's sweat, dust and smoke. Each dries off and gets dressed again while gazing at their wall, until Ashley splashes her pail of water into the drain.

Then each finds a quiet corner for their morning routines. A few hours later without any real command, they regroup in the courtyard. Kevin says, "I have a confession to make. I think I screwed up the water system last night. I vaguely remember tripping over a hose on the roof. Should have said something. That was sloppy." Before anyone else responds Matt quips loudly,

“No worries, mate! As long as you didn’t let a croc into the outhouse! I’ll drive the truck into a river later for a proper bath!”

Miragoane Beach and Stadium

At that, Ashley announces it’s a perfect time to go to the local beach. They load up their truck with some bamboo mats, towels, and a cooler full of water jugs. Jocelyn approaches Ashley and whispers something to her. Ashley replies, “Men, oui!” Jocelyn returns with a small boy who shyly climbs into the truck bed with Jocelyn. “Komo o ye?” Kevin asks and the little guy gives him a small smile.

As they’re loading up, Kevin learns that everyone calls the boy Ti Mon and that he almost never speaks. No one’s sure what his real name is, where he lives, or if he has parents. Ashley often finds him curled up in the back of the truck in the morning. She doesn’t make a big deal out of it, because she worries he’ll stop coming by the house and will end up in a more dangerous situation. The Haitians who live in the neighborhood don’t like Ti Mon and accuse him of stealing whenever something goes missing. Ashley says it’s certainly possible that he steals to survive, but she says the neighbors have accused Ti Mon of stealing when he was with her all day.

The band of five arrive at the beach around noon and Kevin realizes that it’s for locals. Ashley, Matt, and Kevin are the only non-Haitians but no one seems hostile and after a few curious glances, everyone goes back to what they were doing. There are plenty of palm trees on the beach to provide shade. They quickly find available lounge chairs and assemble them around a fire pit. Many of the families have charcoal fires going and the smell of roasting meat and spices wafts through the air. There aren’t any lifeguards or public bathrooms though. Kevin is a bit nervous about how close they are to a river that’s emptying into the bay. The water is brown and he remarks about it to Ashley. She just laughs and says, “Oh, I’m sure it’s just top soil... But maybe don’t open your mouth or eyes or ears in the water, just to be safe!”.

Kevin decides that he’ll just enjoy the sand and sun today and settles in to read a book called “A Prayer For Owen Meany” that Ashley has read. They talk about each chapter as Kevin finishes it. Matt snores quietly with a bottle of local-brand Prestige beer tucked between his feet.

Jocelyn and Ti Mon are occupying themselves with some sort of game involving a stick, an old bicycle wheel, a ball of yarn, and lots of counting out loud.

Kevin realizes that no one is begging for ti kob. Their group isn't approached by anyone. No one is hostile or intentionally ignoring them. It just seems that since they're on the local beach, no one is treating them like tourists. One man approaches eventually approaches with a bag made from fishing net. It's filled with coconuts and he asks, "Ou vle dlo coconut?" Ashley replies, "Oui moche." After a brief negotiation, she hands the man a couple Haitian gourdes. He pulls a giant machete out of a sheath he's carrying on one shoulder, chooses a coconut from the bag, and before Kevin knows what's happened the man has opened the shell at one end. He hands the coconut to Ashley, who drinks the coconut water directly from the shell. After a few swallows she tells the man, "Tre bon!" and hands the coconut to Kevin. The man slings the bag and machete over his shoulder and looks to Kevin, who takes a long swallow and agrees, "Tre bon!"

As the beach goers start packing up for the afternoon, Ashley suggests that they watch a soccer match at the municipal stadium. Kevin asks if they can still get tickets and she replies, "For a few dollars, we can get all the seats we want. Although since everything is general admission, we'll probably end up standing." They load back into the Land Cruiser and head for the game. Walking toward the stadium, they can see the bleachers are packed with fans on both sides of the field with multi-color pennants and signs, all swaying with the pulsing music. No loudspeakers but just raw people power. There are kids climbing over and under the chain link fence. A guy in security guard uniform with a pistol on his belt seems more interested in talking with the girls than making sure everyone is paying at the ticket booth.

Ashley buys their tickets and leads them to a spot near one of the goals. There are competing ra-ra bands making a racket on either side of the stadium. The whistles, drums, and chants are impossible to resist and they soon find themselves swaying along with the rest of the crowd. The energy is celebratory and the Haitians seem genuinely happy that some blan are here to watch their local athletes compete. Kevin never learns which team is the home team since the crowd argues every call and cheers wildly when either team makes a play.

As the sun goes down, they notice there's a blackout so there won't be any lights on the field. The fans don't mind and the players seem to be willing to keep playing as long as they can see the white ball. But Ashley leans over to Matt and Kevin and says quietly, "We should get going. I

don't want to get caught in this crowd after dark." Kevin looks around to see that most of the people around them are young men. Jocelyn and Ti Mon have stayed close by, so the group is able to quickly shuffle their way toward the stadium exit. There are street vendors waiting outside with their little carts. The hand crafts are of exquisite quality and the food smells delicious. Kevin asks Ashley what he's smelling and if any of it is safe to eat. She looks closely at the nearest carts, "That's grio which is fried pork. I never trust the pork. That's banan peze which is deep-fried plantain. The oil looks rancid though, so I wouldn't eat any of that either."

They walk toward their truck and pass a woman selling shaved ice. Ashley begins talking quickly with her in Creole and Kevin hears the word Culligan several times. After some back-and-forth Ashley says, "This will be safe. The ice block is from purified water and she's serving the shaved ice in paper cups. I love the licorice syrup. Do you want to try one?" Kevin does and feels like he'll melt into himself. He realizes it's the first time he's tasted anything this cold in weeks. As the ice melts in his mouth, he closes his eyes and enjoys this moment of luxury among friends.

The little band make their way back to the grass field where their truck is parked. Kevin notices that the Toyota's windows are all open and exclaims, "Oh shit, did someone break into the truck? We should have hired a guard." Ashley just laughs, "Oh, I doubt it. There's nothing to steal except the truck itself!" Matt grins and slaps Kevin playfully on the shoulder, "It's the oldest trick. Never leave anything valuable in a vehicle. Instead, open all the windows and unlock all the doors. Leave something silly on the floor like an old pair of panties or one shoe. Thieves will ignore your car, assuming someone else already robbed it!"

As they get into the Land Cruiser, Matt continues, "This old truck hasn't had a radio since its original was stolen. But the speaker wiring is all good. On road trips, we bring the boom box out of the house, plug it into the dashboard and then we be jammin!" The Australian impersonating a Haitian, impersonating a Jamaican, causes uncontrollable laughter. They all start singing in their own language and key, bellowing a version of Redemption Song as they round the corner onto their street.

Self-Defense

Mirogoane Stronghold

They arrive at the house and are unloading the truck when there's a loud commotion outside their gate. A few dozen neighbors are shouting and shoving Ti Mon around. He slipped away after they'd arrived at the house and now the crowd has him. He's surrounded and they're calling him names like, "Ti vagabon. Tet cho." Ashley tries to speak with a neighbor at the edge of the crowd but the noise is so loud they can't hear each other. Ashley steps toward Ti Mon and tries to take his hand but the crowd absorbs him too quickly. She follows the crowd and Matt and Kevin join her. Jocelyn calls something to Matt, who looks back at her and nods before Jocelyn steps back into the courtyard.

The crowd grows larger as they approach the police station. A few cops are lounging outside with cigarettes and a bottle, but they stand and get weapons ready as the crowd approaches. One calls back into the station and a Haitian man in plainclothes and dark glasses steps into view, holding a handgun. A handful of uniformed cops form a line behind him, still smoking their cigarettes, but the bottle has been replaced with rifles at the ready.

Ashley, Matt, and Kevin are now part of the crowd. Matt is acting as a fullback, pushing his way toward the station steps. Ashley's behind him, her hands holding onto belt. Kevin tucks in behind her. He feels a lot of groping and grasping hands but ignores them and keeps his hands on Ashley's shoulders ahead of him. Suddenly the crowd stills and Ti Mon is shoved onto the station steps, stumbling and sprawling at the feet of the police. One slings his rifle and grabs Ti Mon by his ear, yanking the boy to his feet as he screams in pain.

Ashley lunges toward Ti Mon when he seems to be dangling in the air by one ear. The plainclothes officer stops her with an outstretched hand, shoving her back into the crowd with Kevin and Matt. The cop holding Ti Mon's ear lowers him slightly, so that the boy's toes can barely touch the ground. Plainclothes asks something to the crowd and everyone begins shouting at once. Kevin can't understand what they're saying, but Matt is just shaking his head. Ashley looks horrified and she cries out toward the cops in English, "Please stop! He has done nothing

wrong.” The uniformed police don’t seem to hear her but Kevin notices that Plainclothes is looking only at Ashley. His lips part in a sneer and he slowly says to her, “M pa pale Angle.”

The crowd begins shouting their accusations at Ti Mon. Kevin hears, “today” and “steals” and “vagabond”. Then, his stomach is in his mouth as he hears, “Pere Lebrun”. The cops begin nodding and one pulls out a wooden match, lights it, and passes it slowly back and forth in front of Ti Mon’s eyes. The boy squeezes his eyes shut and another cop slaps him on the back of the head until he opens them again. The crowd is cheering now, as Match Cop takes another from the box and tries to light it on the top of Ti Mon’s head. He drags the wooden stick through his short hair, tearing away clumps of skin and hair with each attempt to strike the match.

Kevin freezes in horror as another cop emerges from the station with a tire and bottle of kerosene. The crowd hushes as the police continue to slap Ti Mon and shove him around like a pinball, striking matches on his head and face. The one holding Ti Mon’s ear lets go when a match lights near his own hand. Ti Mon falls to the ground and lands in the fetal position, rocking and sobbing, “Mama. Papa.” Ashley is finally able to push herself to the front of the crowd and faces the plainclothes officer. She looks into his reflective dark glasses for a long moment, before partially turning toward the crowd. In Creole, her voice cutting through the silence, “What would President Titid say? Is this how he would want a small boy to be treated?”

The cops are laughing and pretending not to hear her but Plainclothes is watching her closely. Ashley continues, “This boy was with me all day. He has done nothing wrong.” Then she gestures to Matt and Kevin standing at her side and asks them dramatically, “Was Ti Mon with us all day?” Matt nods in agreement and when she repeats the question in English, Kevin starts nodding his head too. Ashley turns back to the cop, “Are you calling us liars?” Then back to the crowd, “Are you saying Ti Mon is worth nothing?” After a pause, “I will not watch this anymore.” Her face changes and she draws herself upright, looking like an aggrieved mother. “We will take this boy back home with us. Do not do this to our family again.”

Kevin holds his breath as Ashley steps past Plainclothes’ gun and gently pulls Ti Mon to his feet. No one moves or makes a sound as she puts her arms around him, picks him up, and carries him toward the gate where Jocelyn is waiting and watching. Kevin turns to follow and glances over his shoulder. Two of the cops are starting to move toward Ashley and are raising their weapons. Plainclothes gestures for them to stop. He sees Kevin and Matt watching and says in

clear English, “Follow your white bitch!” Kevin and Matt say nothing but continue walking backward toward the house gate, keeping their eyes locked on Plainclothes. When they get inside, Jocelyn quickly shuts and locks the gate behind them. She calls out to Matt, “Key on peg” before joining Ashley and hugging Ti Mon. Kevin offers to take Ti Mon from Ashley’s arms so she can wipe the tears streaming down her face. But the little guy has a death lock around her neck and won’t let go. They slowly exhale and look at each other. Then Kevin’s chosen family has a tearful and joyful reunion like no other.

The next day

Somehow amid everything else the night before, Ti Mon climbed up onto the roof and reconnected the fill line. Now the water barrel is filled. Everyone gathers around Ti Mon to thank him and his little face breaks out in a huge grin. Now there’s water for bathing, toilet flushing, and mopping. Kevin has all his gear packed except for a bottle of local, raw rum that won’t fit in his backpack. It’s called clairin and goes perfectly with coconut water and cane sugar. Kevin asks, “How am I gonna get this back to Carrefour without drinking it?” Matt replies quickly, “Just share it with your mates on the tap-tap. Fair dinkem!”. Jocelyn laughs out loud and rolls her eyes, “Bouki net!” Ti Mon just nestles himself deeper into Ashley’s lap and grins like he’s won the daily lotto.

Kevin plans to take the return trip to Carrefour after attending a local Haitian church service with Ashley and Matt. As they’re about to leave for the service, they hear banging on the metal gate in the courtyard. Jocelyn takes Ti Mon inside the house. Kevin follows Ashley and Matt outside to see what’s going on. They hear agitated speech from the other side of the gate and Matt’s face hardens. He positions himself just out of sight beside Ashley, as she opens the peephole to look outside. After a few tense moments she relaxes and says, “It’s just the neighbors”.

Ashley opens the door and lets a small group of Haitian women into the courtyard. Jocelyn tells Ti Mon to wait in the house and then joins them. After smiling shyly and nodding politely to Matt and Kevin, the neighborhood women launch into a very intense conversation with Jocelyn and Ashley. Kevin can’t understand much of what he’s hearing but the back and forth is clearly urgent. Matt has taken the sentry position at the gate’s peephole and is listening closely. The

conversation comes to a close and Ashley thanks the women over and over, giving each a hug as they walk back out the gate.

After they leave, Matt closes the gate and exhales loudly. Ashley sees Kevin's questioning expression and explains, "They were here to warn us of another coup attempt. Everyone seems to have a different set of information about what's going on." Matt, "I can't decide if it's Tele Joel or the real thing!" He sees Kevin's confusion and adds, "It's the Haitian term for the game of 'telephone' where rumors get passed from one bloke to another until no one remembers the original story. The most common Haitian name is 'Joel'. But no one has phones, so Tele Joel!" Ashley continues, "Some are hearing that the coup has already been successful. Others say the police attempted the coup but the military stepped in and stopped it. The neighbors couldn't agree on exactly what's happening but they're very worried about our safety."

Matt walks to a nearby storage shed and pulls out the heavy chain and massive padlock. He wraps the chain through the steel door handles and locks the padlock. He calls over to Jocelyn, "Key on peg!" after placing it on its hook. Then he says to Kevin, "That'll keep them out for a while. But if they want in, they'll get in." Kevin asks who "they" are. Matt chuckles humorlessly, "That's always the question. It could be Lavalas supporters who think we're working for the CIA. It could be disgruntled former Macoutes who think we're leftists. It can just be criminals looking for a soft target. When these things get started, anything can happen."

While Matt is certainly no pacifist, he works for NGO Education because he's a secular humanist. He's adamant that non-violence is the only strategy for sustainable change. Ashley is a Quaker so Kevin asks them, "How serious is this and what are our options for self-protection?" Ashley looks over her shoulder reflexively and lowers her voice to just above a whisper, "We really have no support of any kind here. Our whole mission is to live among the community and become part of their culture. They don't have security protection so we don't either." Kevin starts laughing, "Wait, we're not in Kansas anymore?" She chuckles darkly, "There's no place like home..." Matt roars with laughter, "Your Navy Seals always say, Why bother bringing my own weapon? If I need to one, I'll take yours!" Ashley chuckles ruefully before continuing, "But really, if we've been successful these past years the community will protect us as they will their own. We're here without a safety net and I'm sorry for bringing you out here without explaining that first." After considering this, Kevin shrugs and then grins, "I wouldn't have it any other way."

If I wanted ‘normal’ I would have stayed home!” Then a half second later, “But seriously, do you have any comms setup with Port? It’s one thing to be on a limb but it’s another when no one even knows.” Ashley laughs sardonically, “Oh yeah? Does anyone know where you are right now?” Kevin pauses a beat or two, “Well, shit... Good point. That’s going to be a problem when I show up at the station tomorrow.”

A loud burst of automatic weapon fire erupts nearby and interrupts the conversation, so they move from the courtyard back inside the house. Kevin does a brief inventory of their communication gear and concludes that his old short-wave receiver is all they have. It’s already out of his backpack and tuned to Voice of America. Matt comments, “Really, Kevin? VOA?” Without hesitation Kevin replies, “Always good to monitor enemy comms!”

There’s no phone in the house and there aren’t any pay phones in Haiti. Kevin usually goes to a local Telco office to place calls and wait for callbacks, but the Telco offices aren’t open on weekends. They all take turns switching the radio between Radio Protestant and local AM stations but none are mentioning a coup attempt. The French news services don’t start airing until later in the day. The absence of local coverage doesn’t mean much. Kevin explains that Radio Protestant won’t air anything until there’s an official statement from whoever claims to be in control of the government.

For the next hour, the rattle of gunfire continues sporadically but doesn’t seem to be getting closer. After scanning all the usual radio frequencies without hearing any new information Kevin finally asks, “How do we know anything is happening at all? We could be hiding in this house just because of a rumor. Maybe we should drive around a bit to see what’s really going on.” Ashley opens her mouth to reply, pauses, and then looks over to Matt who slowly shakes his head. She sighs. “I didn’t want to tell you this because it’s probably just alarmist. The local women insist that we not go into the streets. There’s a lot of “pale cho” among their husbands, basically saying that the blan won’t get away with it this time. Some of the local thugs are talking about kidnapping foreigners and holding them hostage as retaliation. Since we’re the only blan within miles, we’re being closely watched.”

Kevin suddenly recalls Tim’s warning, “Just so we’re clear, I’m operating independently down here with the agreement that my NGO will not make any ransom payments. Reasons. Long story.” Matt shakes his head, “Wow, mate. They really sent you down here dirty!” Ashley just

lowers her face and looks at the table. Kevin stands up, grabs his coffee cup and says, “If we’re putting our security in the community’s hands, we should do as instructed.” They agree to keep stay in the Mirogoane Stronghold for the rest of the day.

Ashley has some letters to write, so Matt and Kevin climb up onto the roof to see if traffic is moving on Highway 1, the only road that connects Mirogoane to Port-au-Prince. As they look around, they see a plume of smoke rising a few blocks away. Matt points toward it, “That’s not good. The police station is right over there.” As if in reply, they hear a rapid series of booms and pops. Kevin, “Sounds like shotguns and handguns. No automatic weapons.” Matt nods, “Still small arms fire but that was a LOT closer.”

People start running by in all directions. Kevin and Matt call down to them from the roof, “Sak pase?” Eventually, a few young men stop in the alley below them. They start arguing among themselves about what’s happening. Matt listens and quietly explains what they’re saying. “Rumors are that the police are plotting the next coup. People are rising up against them all over Port-au-Prince. Other than the warning shots we heard, the Mirogoane police have not engaged but a crowd has gathered and is burning tires and debris in front of the station.” Kevin sniffs the air, “I think that smoke is getting thicker.”

It’s too hot on the roof in the mid-day sun, so they climb back downstairs and spend the rest of the afternoon listening to the radio and trying to figure out what’s really happening. Periodically, someone will look into the sky in the direction of the police station but the plume of smoke doesn’t seem to be getting any larger. It isn’t getting thinner either. Ashley comments, “Someone is definitely keeping that blaze going. I’m surprised the police aren’t shooting at them.”

By dinner time, there have been no official statements from the Government of Haiti. Ashley and Jocelyn report that the neighbor women are just rehashing old rumors. No one has new information. The sun sets and Kevin realizes he’s not getting back to Carrefour tonight. He comments about this to Ashley. She smiles shyly, “Well, I haven’t been up on the roof yet. Let’s go up there and see what happens!”

The next morning

The damned roosters rouse Kevin and Ashley from their bamboo mat on the roof. They found a mosquito net at some point and arranged it in a tent/lean-to against the water barrel. They don't hear any gunfire and the smoke has cleared. They make their way downstairs where Jocelyn has set up breakfast and is reading by one of the windows. Matt and Ti Mon are lounging in the courtyard playing dominoes. They all say good morning as Kevin and Ashley come into the kitchen. "Good news!", Matt calls out to them, "The Macoutes all crawled back into their holes. No coup after all. Nothing like some burning police stations to remind the cops they don't have enough bullets!"

Before long, music is playing on Matt's boom box. There's a Haitian band named Boukman that's being nominated for a Grammy back in the States. All the local stations are playing it on a loop. It's a style of music that reminds Kevin of the ra-ra bands. He soon has everyone in the house doing their own version of a ra-ra dance.

It's mid-morning now, and Kevin finally decides he needs to leave. He says goodbye to everyone and they agree it's not farewell. Port-au-Prince tap-tap service is up and running after the previous day's scare. Kevin gets in one at the very last minute as its driver is getting behind the wheel. The ride east toward Carrefour is surreal. With a full view of the scenery this time, Kevin watches the quiet rural villages around Miragoane turn into empty, sun-baked fields, scarred from one last attempt to burn the sugar cane into something like fertilizer. Then the rapid train-like effect of the tap-tap suddenly entering a dark cavern with tin shacks, cement walls, and rubble rising as high as the eye can see.

Carrefour started off as an afterthought suburb outside downtown Port-au-Prince. But its location makes it the gateway between Haiti north and south, turning it into a thriving maelstrom of unzoned industrial, commercial, and residential chaos. Hastily arranged cables are thrown atop giant power towers high above the buildings. Industrious entrepreneurs have tapped so many extension wires into the towers that the whole arrangement appears to be some sort of organism escaping its cocoon. The sprawl of Port-au-Prince soon absorbed Carrefour but never really controlled it. No one has ever bothered to pave the streets and there is no public sewer or water anywhere outside Port-au-Prince or the gated communities in Petionville. Carrefour grew

up around the station and then turned into slums. Radio Protestant's engineers used to live near the station, but Tim discourages this because engineers "keep going native out there".

The tap-tap comes to an abrupt halt. Looking around, Kevin guesses he's about a 30-minute walk to the radio station. He needs to gather all the gear needed for the Mount Beef trip, and then get gone. Carrefour is the fault line between rival gangs, so a walk is a stroll through the lion's den. Kevin senses that he's pushed his luck enough the past few days, so he leans out to see what's stopped traffic. The main police station in Carrefour is just a half kilometer ahead. It is completely bombed out and smoldering. The awful standard yellow paint on the front of the station is covered in black bullet holes with a huge hole blown out of the center of the front wall. The iron bars have all been pulled out of the windows. Lavalas graffiti is sprayed all over it and the station is abandoned.

A passenger explains that a curfew was declared yesterday and was only lifted this morning. All traffic from Miragoane and points south need to pass through Carrefour. No one is sure which gang controls Highway 1 right now, so the tap-tap drivers are all trying to convince each other to run the gauntlet to find out. Also, whatever accelerant was used to ignite the bunker police station, spilled out onto Highway 1 and melted what little asphalt remained, creating a smoldering moat across the highway.

At this point, Kevin is very glad he traveled light. He grabs his backpack, steps down from the tap-tap, glances at the surprised Haitian faces inside, and says "M' ale". As he makes his way toward one of the alleys, he remembers that he still has that bottle of clairin in his bag after leaving some books in Mirogoane. That will be more than enough to get him past any neighborhood watch checkpoints. He lights another cigarette, coughs into the smoke and dust around him, then uses the feet God gave him to walk toward the station.

At the first checkpoint, he has the bottle of clairin open. Before the shouting begins, Kevin takes a swallow, wipes the mouth of the bottle, and passes it to the young man who seems to be in charge. "Sak pase?", Kevin asks. The young man pauses, then takes a drink. He passes it to his friend and the bottle is passed around until it returns to the man in charge. He hands it back to Kevin and grins slyly, "Just hand this to the guys a couple blocks away and tell them it's from Yves. They'll keep it but will let you pass."

One bottle lighter but still on his two feet, Kevin arrives at the station. Just in time for Head Engineer to hurry him inside, explaining that he can stay in the extra bedroom. Then Technician Jè stops by Kevin's workbench and tells him that he's found a perfect two-bedroom house just a few blocks away. Maybe they can be roommates. Kevin has the cash. Jè has access to the station's vehicles. Many problems solved. As Kevin sinks into the old leather chair at his work bench, the ceiling fan whirs and mosquitos buzz. Jè returns to his own workbench and continues soldering. Kevin opens a manual on solar panels. A solar powered repeater could give base communities their own comms network. "What's the line between education and information warfare?" he calls to Jè, who just snorts and continues working. The Haitian on-air staff have managed to slip the new Boukman song on air. The one about remembering their African roots. Kevin recalls some advice he received from a Haitian mentor, "Love, like voodoo, does not travel overseas." He wonders if the same can be said for the truth.

PART FOUR: COLLABORATORS

Safety First

March 1991

Carrefour, Radio Protestant

After returning from Mirogoane, Kevin moves in with Jè as planned. It's an easy move involving his backpack, the footlocker from Mother Mary's, and some used furniture they've collected from friends. They agree that Creole will be the house language, even though Jè has excellent English. They'll speak English at the station or as Jè puts it, "whenever I can't take a chance of you getting confused!"

Then it's time to prepare for excursion to Mount Boeffe in Southern Haiti. It's one of the highest peaks on a mountain range that begins near Miragoane and stretches to Ceyes. With line of sight to all of southern Haiti, the Mount Boeffe tower can then relay signals from Port-au-Prince to the cities of Jacmel, Ceyes, and Jeremie. Kevin asks Jè to join him on the trip as "bodyguard". Jè agrees, but only after emphasizing that he won't be stepping in front of any bullets.

They're at the station and Jè emerges from a large closet in the engineering team's work area. He's in his mid-twenties, average height and weight, with short cropped hair and thin mustache. He wears dark slacks and is sweating through his collared shirt, as he drags two large canvas bags into the room. Kevin joins him and they start pulling things out of the bags. Jè asks Kevin, "Are you sure those priests in the base community can help us?" Kevin chuckles, "Can't do worse than the last group of American engineers." Jè replies dismissively, "Seriously. We needed a dozen guys to drag their bagay to the peak!"

Kevin sighs as he disentangles a multi-meter's prongs from a tangle of cables. "Then they lost the manuals and left this mess behind." He shakes a portable radio battery out of the bag. Its connection terminals are corroded badly and it leaks chemicals onto the floor. Kevin shakes his head in disgust and bursts into a coughing fit. Jè dumps the other bag, disgorging a cloud of dust and rat droppings into the work space. Coughing and sneezing, they pull on the rusty chains to

open the garage doors and step into the station's courtyard for some fresh air. When the dust clears, they return to the engineering bay and continue assembling the gear they'll need.

The Head Engineer opens the door from the office area and looks at the pile of debris in the middle of the engineering bay. "Tim just radioed down from Delmas. He wants to know if you guys are on your way yet." He looks at the pile and the empty SUV outside the engineering bay. "What do I tell him?" Kevin and Jè look at each other and Kevin's face breaks into a mischievous grin. He winks at Jè and responds to Head Engineer, "Tell him that I'm trying to find all the manuals that we gave his Alabama friends." Head Engineer grins, "Oh, I'll gladly pass that along!" They all laugh until he continues, "But for my own sanity, what exactly do you want me to tell him? I can't believe I'm the negotiator between God-almighty Tim and you!"

Kevin says with his best innocent face, "If he doesn't come down here until next week, he'll never need to see me again. He won't need to be on short-wave with me all month either, because Jè has a radio that he keeps in our kitchen." Jè starts to chuckle, expecting what will come next from the Head Engineer. "What do you mean, last time Tim will see you? You're covering for me this summer when I go on vacation." Kevin shrugs, "You better work that out with Tim. He doesn't want to see me at the station all summer. Sounds like I'll be fired by the time you get back anyway." Kevin dusts his hands off and pulls on some leather gloves, "Tell him we're loading up and will be on the mountain fixing the transmitter any day now."

Department of Sud, Highway 1 toward Cayes

Jè drives his small Geo SUV on the main highway south. Highway 1 is really just a two-lane road with one shared lane of asphalt. Kevin doesn't have a driver's license or any documentation other than his US passport and a letter of Radio Protestant engineer / press pass. He also has an officially sealed letter from Haiti's Department of Cults explaining that he's a technical consultant. It might get him past a checkpoint or neighborhood shake-down, but not must else.

Kevin is crumbling up a greasy wrapper from the pork grio he just grabbed at the gas station/bodega when Jè topped off the Geo. They ride together quietly, as Jè downshifts calmly and avoids a donkey that's just wandering into traffic. A few pedestrians scatter and cough dramatically as he gets the SUV back on asphalt with an impressive rooster tail of dust fanning

out behind them. Jè puts his arm out the driver's side window and gives a wiggling hand signal, a sort of "sorry, not sorry" acknowledgement that usually turns any affront into a shared moment of levity. Then they're back on their on-road/off-road journey at a breath-taking speed of 50 km/hr, the small SUV's suspension groaning and bucking at each pothole as Jè casually steers through each sudden jerk of the wheel.

An hour later, Jè slows at an intersection where a dirt and gravel road leads north. A hand-painted symbol of a mountain peak is the only indicator of destination. He looks at Kevin uncertainly, "Now what?". Kevin considers for a moment, "First chance to see if our friends are expecting us." He pulls himself up and out of the passenger side of the Geo and walks over to a few young Haitian men, who regard him impassively as he approaches.

Jè can't hear the exchange but he sees Kevin gesturing with a lot of elaborate hand waving and head bobbing. He sees the largest man start smiling and then all of them, including Kevin, are laughing and pointing up the hill. Kevin shakes hands with them, hands out a couple packs of Marlboro Reds and climbs back into the Geo. After closing the door, he turns to Jè and points ahead, "Onward and upward!" Jè puts the SUV back in gear and starts driving slowly away from the checkpoint. "I still can't believe you escaped Tim's cage without really being able to speak Kreyòl. How did you do that?"

As they make their way uphill, Kevin breaths in the fresher, cooler air, lights a local cigarette and exhales out the window before replying, "Well, I finally realized that I can't play poker because my face is so expressive. Since I can't talk in English without using my hands, I just pantomimed and Creole-ished my case to the Haitian on-air talent, and then convinced them to go tell Tim that I am fully capable of leaving the nest." Jè starts to laugh, "And let me guess, they went along with it?" Kevin starts laughing too, "Oh, of course! It was amazing. Since Tim won't speak with me directly, he had to take their word for it. How else would I have been able to convince them?"

"This is why we say you're Haitian-American!", Jè barks, "You're just as crafty as us but you're so obviously American." He pantomimes a six-gun with his gear-shift hand and says in an exaggerated John Wayne drawl, "Howdy there, partner!" Kevin turns and replies in his best Deniro accent, "You talking to me?!" Now that Jè has watched Kevin's entire VHS library of

three films, he starts singing in his best falsetto, “Roxanne! You don’t have to put on the red light!”.

They’re roaring with laughter now, and Jè is having a trouble keeping the Geo in the middle of the single dirt lane. “And I forgot!”, Jè burst out, “Tim still doesn’t know that the staff speak English better than the Americans!” Kevin leans back in his seat, “None of the missionaries seem to connect those dots. Every Haitian in Port has better English than their Creole. The blan congratulate themselves for losing their Texan accents while speaking elementary school Creole. Meanwhile, I’m actually communicating without learning the language properly. But that’s perfect. What they don’t know can’t hurt us!”

A few hours later, Kevin is very glad they didn’t try to bring along more batteries. The SUV is straining on the steep incline; it’s four little tires spinning frantically and causing Kevin to look nervously over the steep cliff on his right. There are no guardrails, so when he can’t see the road anymore he calls out, “Attencion!” and Jè carefully edges away from the cliff toward the sheer wall on his side of the road. Eventually the road turns into a narrow trail with so many blind switch-backs that Jè stops and looks at Kevin, “Hey blan, can you walk ahead to make sure I’m not about to have a head-on collision with a donkey or something?” Kevin laughs, “OK, but I’m not stepping in front of any donkeys!” He gets out and starts walking ahead of Jè until the roadway widens again, then climbs back into the Geo.

Community

Department of Sud, Ti Legliz Village

Eventually they reach a plateau and the path fades into a small pasture, shaded by fir trees. They see a few well-maintained homes arranged around a stone chapel. Jè maneuvers around the goats that wander into the path. Gardeners surround their plots with fence posts, but no wire. Goat owners put triangular wooden harnesses around each goat’s neck. The goats can travel freely anywhere except into the gardens surrounded by fence poles.

Jè backs the little SUV into a small grove of trees that hide another track leading down the mountain to Highway 1. As they're getting out of the Geo and deciding what to carry with them toward the chapel, two Haitian men and a woman approach them from another grove of trees that Kevin hadn't noticed when they arrived. A fourth person remains in the grove and Kevin sees a flash of sunlight from binoculars. As the trio approaches, Kevin recognizes one of the young priests from Mother Mary's. Kevin's face breaks into a grin. "Father Jean"? Jean is probably the second most common Haitian name. Kevin remembers that this priest was educated in France and loves the musical, *Le Miserables*. He meets the priest's outstretched hand, shakes it firmly and asks again, "Father Jean Valjean, do you have a loaf of bread for a blan?" The young Haitian priest starts laughing and hums his favorite verse.

Code phrase dealt with, Kevin introduces Jè to Father Jean. They shake hands as Father Jean continues. "Welcome to Ti Legliz. I'd like to introduce Solange and Panielle, our village leaders. If you need anything and can't find me, consider them to be me." Solange is thin and a bit shorter than Jè. She has the smooth features of a young woman but watchful eyes that seem much older. Her braided hair is tied into a tight bun behind her head under a NY Yankees ball cap. She's wearing a dark t-shirt, traditional Haitian skirt, leggings and leather sandals. Fr. Jean, "Solange grew up near Cap Haitian, ran afoul of their Macoutes, then stayed with friends in Latin America for a while. Now she's joined us here in the south as," Fr. Jean makes air quotes with his fingers, "Organizer Solange". Grinning widely, "She speaks English and Spanish. Do you have any Spanish, Kevin?" Kevin gives a little laugh and says apologetically, "Just whatever I've forgotten from high school." Solange chuckles, "Don't worry. You'll learn it when you need it." Kevin quickly replies, "That's what they said about Creole!"

Father Jean waits for everyone to stop laughing, smiles broadly and gestures to Panielle, "This is our scholar from Paris." Panielle slowly smiles under his straw fedora-style hat. He has a hint of a mustache, wears round glasses, an untucked dress shirt, and dark dress pants over black boots. He also has a sheathed machete resting on the seat next to him. Fr. Jean continues, "We met in Paris a long time ago. Panielle, why don't you tell everyone why you're here." Panielle clears his throat and glances around the table, "I'm here to plant trees, honestly. A Canadian NGO has been reforesting Thiotte with legume trees that grow a half meter a year. Their grant money runs out this year, so they've trained Haitian organizers to continue the work all over the country. It's really our last chance to get out of the tree, charcoal, cooking cycle. That UN

experiment with little propane camp stoves was a total failure. Propane burns too hot and ruins the Haitian style of rice and beans. Now the empties are bobbing around in the Caribbean.”

Kevin looks around the table and sees everyone shaking their heads sadly. With a bemused expression he asks, “But in a few years the new trees could reforest the country, right?”. Panielle looks at Kevin in confusion until Father Jean gently explains, “Sustainable forestry interferes with the charcoal cartel. They just call out the old Macoute death squads who target our organizers and agronomists. Then they cut down all the trees and punish the village.” Kevin looks around the table, “Of course! Sorry about that. I shouldn’t have needed the explanation. But Gracias!”

Solange grins and replies, “De nada! We’re learning all the time.” They start getting up from the table as Father Jean adds, “We have an entire country on the run. Until the Aristide government can root out the Macoutes in local government, organizers like Solange and Panielle are in hiding where the police informants don’t know them. It’s why you won’t meet many of our local agronomists and organizers. They’re all out hiding in other provinces.” Panielle adds, “It’s very difficult to be away from family but it’s safest for everyone. We’re cross-pollinating knowledge though, so maybe it’s for the best.”

Ti Legliz

As they walk, Kevin sees how easily this village can be defended. The houses are arranged around the stone chapel inside a walled town square. He’s heard from reliable sources that the Government of Haiti or cartels will send “tax collectors” into some of these communities, but they never return. Rather than admit they’ve lost control of the provinces, the government pretends none of that ever happens. Kevin notes the absence of visible firearms. None of the villagers carry guns but the adults carry machetes at all times. The kids harden sticks over charcoal fires while rice and beans are cooking. Then they run around the community with their sticks, occasionally using them to discipline a wayward goat or to spar among themselves. The priests carry walking sticks that Kevin knows are made of incredibly hard wood. He’s seen them split coconuts with one well-aimed strike.

A bell rings, signaling that the work day is finished and the community gravitates toward long tables arranged in the village square. Lay members of the church bring trays of food and pitchers of spring water to the tables. They reassure Kevin that the water is safe to drink without filtering. Steaming pots of sweet coffee are arranged on the tables with a collection of chipped coffee mugs. They sit on the benches and Kevin is stretching his hamstrings, when he sees Father Jean approaching with a small group of young Haitian men.

One of the new men is clearly their leader. The others defer to him in that unspoken way. He's wearing olive fatigues, a dark green t-shirt, and has a machete slung over his shoulder in a scabbard. He isn't physically imposing but has the tight, wiry frame of most Haitian men. He moves lightly in his dark combat boots as he makes his way toward them. The meal preparation chaos parts around him like a river. As he gets closer to the table, Kevin can see that the man is already looking directly at him and is making no attempt to break eye contact. His face is relaxed though and his eyes are friendly. The only mark on his face is a broken and badly reset nose, which Kevin can tell was caused by a police riot club.

When everyone is seated, they drop their heads and Father Jean offers a brief blessing for the food. Kevin has heard this prayer before but he can never get it entirely right. Something like, "We thank you for this food we are about to share, even though so many have so little." A group of altar boys arrive with their serving bowls and ladles. When everyone has their plate filled, Father Jean clears his throat and gets the attention of the table. "I don't have a lot of time since I need to get back to Port tomorrow morning." He looks at Kevin and grins, "I'll tell Father Vitor you found your way here. He'll be surprised, but not really!"

Then it's back to business. "Jè and Kevin are here on two missions. The first is cover; to get the Protestant station's transmitter going. The other is for Kevin to spend the summer with us and work on other projects." He looks at Jè, "You're OK with only knowing part of the story?" Without hesitation Jè replies, "I'd rather not know any of the story. Good luck keeping an eye on this guy". Jè looks over at Kevin who responds with an innocent, "Who, me?" expression and they both break into laughter. Fr. Jean smiles and says, "Bon homme!"

Then Father Jean turns toward the new men at the table, "You'll get to know them yourselves but consider Jè and Kevin to be friends of ours." The men glance over to Solange who nods in agreement. Then Fr. Jean continues, "Now I'd like to introduce the leader for our mountain-top

mission.” He nods his chin toward the man with the broken nose, “We call him Henri, because it’s nothing like his real name.” They all chuckle at the worn joke. Fr. Jean continues, “As you probably guessed, the good-looking one is Jè.” Now everyone is laughing enthusiastically and Kevin says, “You can call me Blan. Tout sanble!” which causes even Father Jean to burst into laughter. While the laughter dies down, Kevin walks around the table and shakes Henri’s hand.

Then Father Jean says to everyone as his face grows serious, “It might be best if we all remember faces and forget real names, out of kindness...” He grows quiet for a moment and makes the sign of the cross before continuing, “But not today! Since you all need to know, Henri spent some time with the French Foreign Legion. Then with some shadowy groups of comrades in interesting parts of the world. Now he’s back among us doing God’s work.” Henri bows his head and says, “Father Jean, you’re too kind.” The priest smiles at the men and winks at Solange, “You’re all doing God’s work. He needs more than mild-mannered priests and nuns, you know.” Turning to Jè, “For your protection and everyone’s, I think it’s best that you return to the station tomorrow. I’d appreciate if you could give me a lift as far as Carrefour. Henri and team will get Kevin up to the peak. We have our own radio tower nearby. We transmit messages and then stand-by to receive every day at 6 AM and 6 PM.”

Jè confirms the details and then Fr. Jean claps his hands together, “I almost forgot the best part! Father Vitor added a sweetener.” Grinning mischievously, “He has a pastor friend who’s on the board of the National Convention of Haitian Protestant Churches.” He laughs, “How do you keep them straight?” Kevin laughs along and then adds, “I forget. Are all of you Jesuits?” This has the whole group laughing until Father Jean continues, “Since the Convention provides most of Radio Protestant’s local funding, it would be terrible optics if they withheld donations due to concerns about radio coverage for their parishioners in Department Sud.”

He looks at Kevin and Jè, “Whatever else happens, know that you’re always welcome and can find shelter here.” Father Jean gestures around the table and then to the sky, “Until we all agree that Kevin is finished, he’ll be working on the mountain for Radio Protestant. That’s all anyone will need or care to know.” He winks at Kevin, “We’ll get you down to Ceyes every few weeks so you can be seen at church services. That should reassure everyone...” The group is still chuckling as Fr. Jean hands Jè a small two-way radio. “The frequency is already saved. Just find a high place and start using the call-signs Kevin gave you. Do you remember them?” Jè smiles,

“They’re all Bible verses. I already had them memorized!” Fr. Jean laughs, “I’ll give the Protestants that. You all know your Bibles!”

Southern Haiti Mountain Range, Mount Boeffe

Their meal complete, Solange and Father Jean say goodbye. “We’ll be over at the orphanage for the rest of the day if anyone needs us.” Henri takes Kevin, Panielle and the rest of the men into a small garden shed behind the chapel. He turns on a battery-operated bulb when they’re inside. The shed is filled with locked cabinets. Henri unlocks one and begins handing backpacks full of gear to each man. Then he turns to Kevin, “You have your tools and personal gear in your kit already?” Kevin, “I have everything except the batteries.” Henri nods, “We’ll take a donkey along for those.” Then one of Henri’s men adds, “I scouted the tower a week ago. The generators weren’t running.” Kevin nods thoughtfully, “That makes sense. The last engineers couldn’t remember if they reset the timer for the solar panels either.” Glancing at Henri who’s watching him closely, he continues, “The AM signals from Carrefour can’t carry over the mountains. We use low-power FM transmitters on peaks to relay signals around the country.” Henri begins nodding, “Always get to high ground before turning on a radio.”

The next morning, after a light breakfast of coffee, hard bread, and cheese, the men make their way up the trail to Mount Boeffe with their trusty burro in tow. They have a few close calls on some very unstable shale that avalanched over the trail during a recent storm. After lengthy negotiations with the donkey, now nicknamed The Ass, they arrive at the transmission tower as the sun is setting. Kevin and the men take off their packs and sit on the base of the transmission tower, enjoying the view. From their vantage point, they can see the Caribbean Sea to their north and south. As the sun drops into the sea, they watch the ocean change from bright turquoise to a deep, cobalt blue. The night is so clear that Kevin can also see stars for the first time since arriving in Haiti. The smog, dust, and constant haze of Port-au-Prince blot out the starlight each night. Kevin thinks he can see the Southern Cross before some clouds drift in from the north. Then the night turns pitch dark and the men use kerosene lanterns and flashlights to make their way inside the transmitter control shed.

Henri has the men pile all their gear in a circle around the inside of the shed. They lay out blankets and sleeping bags and huddle together on the floor as the night temperature drops to a

temperature that soon has them shivering. They laugh and try to blow smoke rings with the fog that appears when they exhale. Soon their breathing becomes regular and a few light snores are heard. Kevin turns off the last kerosene lantern and falls asleep to the sound of rats scurrying outside the walls of their makeshift luggage moat.

There are no roosters at this altitude to wake them, but Henri has everyone up and packed by sunrise. He says to Kevin, "I'll leave Panielle with you as security. His English will deal with anyone who stops by without Kreyòl." Kevin knows this could mean just about anything if someone shows up without an invitation. Henri continues, "We'll check on our transmitter and should be back by nightfall. If not, we'll return tomorrow so we don't lead anyone here with our flashlights. We might need your help on our tower. But if you haven't figured out what's going on here, we'll help you sort that out first." Kevin agrees and begins pulling out tools and his multi-meter. Without more conversation, Henri and the rest of his team descend the path that leads downhill, then up again to the next peak.

A few hours later Kevin has confirmed that nothing needs repair except the generator that won't start. He's already tapped on the fuel tank and it seems to be more than half full. But having checked everything else, he climbs up onto the tank with his flashlight and opens its hatch. Holding his face away from the opening to avoid inhaling fumes, he drops a long stick into the tank with markings every few inches. But before the stick hits liquid, he feels it sink into something firm. He holds his breath and peers inside the fuel tank. It's filled with sand and diesel. Kevin stares in disbelief, then seals the tank again and climbs back down its ladder.

Sitting on the ground while considering options, Kevin hears new voices. He looks up and sees an old Haitian man climbing the hill, followed by a young boy. Panielle is already watching carefully. When the man arrives at the tower, he begins telling a lengthy story. Kevin can't follow it, but Panielle is nodding along and translates, "He claims he's the caretaker for this site but hasn't been paid by the pastors in years." At this, the old man interrupts and announces "Mwen se, Guardian Joseph". Panielle looks expectantly at Kevin, who just shrugs and replies "Tim never mentioned a caretaker or guardian for this site." The man begins a heated exchange with Panielle, gesturing at Kevin saying, "blan" and "tout sanble". The old man gets increasingly agitated while Panielle looks back at him without expression. Finally Panielle gestures in the

direction of Kevin's tool box on the ground, shrugs, and looks away as if finished with the conversation.

The old man sees the Radio Protestant logo on Kevin's gear and relaxes slightly. Kevin introduces himself, reassures the caretaker that Tim sent him, and then asks about the sand in the fuel tank. The old man looks surprised and shuffles his feet nervously. He looks at the young boy beside him and mutters something. The young boy begins speaking with urgency as Panielle translates, "He says some zenglendo came up here a few weeks after the other engineers left and tried to get into the transmitter building. But when the locks were too strong for their bolt-cutters, they filled the fuel tank with sand and gravel and took the fuel filter with them."

Guardian Joseph says something sharp to the young boy, who flinches and then steps away from the conversation. Kevin looks directly into the guardian's eyes and says to Panielle, "Ask him why the boy was up here and not him." He snorts, "Let's not make this worse." After sighing deeply and looking at the sky, Kevin turns back to the caretaker who is watching him carefully. The wind kicks up just then and everyone starts shivering. Kevin has a warm jacket with a hood. He's already grown accustomed to the warmer temperatures at sea level, so he's glad he brought extra gear. He notices that the young boy is off by himself, wearing nothing but shorts and t-shirt and is shivering so much that his teeth are chattering and his face is streaming with tears. Kevin takes an extra sweatshirt out of his bag and gestures to the young boy to come get it. Instead, the guardian grabs it out of Kevin's hand and tells the boy to sit back down. The older man pulls on Kevin's sweatshirt and thanks him profusely.

Kevin is about to insist that Guardian Joseph give the sweatshirt back to the boy when Panielle leans in and mutters in his ear, "Don't waste your time. Until that boy turns twelve, he's a liability and his family won't do anything to help him. He'll need to toughen up and take care of himself, before his family will give him anything other than food and water." Kevin's eyes are wide he takes a deep breath, "The kid just did that bastard's job for him. Maybe we should hire him instead of a lazy old man who can't even climb up here without help." Panielle steps between the caretaker and Kevin, then waits for him to exhale, "Kevin. We need this guy to be OUR friend." Kevin's shoulders slump and he nods once. "Merci," he says to Panielle, assembles his biggest, toothy smile and turns back to the caretaker, "Merci, Guardian Joseph. Bon nom!". Then he shakes the caretaker's hand.

It's getting late in the afternoon now and Kevin expects Henri's team to be returning from the Catholic radio transmitter. Convinced that the diesel generator is useless, he tells Guardian Joseph that no more help is needed. With Panielle's assistance, Kevin explains that he'll add a few more solar panels to the array. That will keep the transmitter functional for at least a few hours a day. Kevin promises to give an update to the pastors in Ceyes when he's finished. He'll ask them to send Joseph's back pay and an advance for the next year. With that, the guardian beams brightly and shakes Kevin's hand. He shouts something at the young boy, who quickly runs to the old man's side. Kevin sees Henri's team making their way down the rocky path from the neighboring peak. Not wanting the caretaker to have more faces and names to recount later, Kevin walks and talks with him until they're far enough down the path that Henri is no longer visible. Then Kevin shakes his hand again, pats the young boy on the shoulder, and slips him a candy bar before climbing back up to the transmitter site.

Henri soon arrives and tells Kevin that the Catholic transmitter has also been sabotaged. Kevin asks, "What kind of damage?". Henri replies without much elaboration, "The bullet kind." He fishes out a large glass tube that is one of the amplifier vacuum tubes. "This was the only tube they didn't shoot up. Used a shotgun, so there's not much more than cosmetic damage to anything else. But they knew what mattered." Henri sighs, "Any chance you have some spare amplifier tubes in your pack?" Kevin looks closely at the markings on the tube and laughs darkly. Seeing the annoyance on Henri's face he quickly adds, "This is the exact model of amplifier tube that this transmitter uses. Turns out someone stored a bunch of spares up here and forgot about them. I think we can get the Ti Legiz radio transmitting again, courtesy of Radio Protestant!" Henri and the men start laughing and clapping Kevin on the back, the word fou sounding like praise instead of criticism.

PART FIVE: LESSONS

Resilience

April – June 1991

Ti Legliz Village

Kevin spends the rest of his time at Ti Legliz climbing up and down Mount Boeffe and working on other projects as assigned by Solange or Father Jean. He sends reports to Tim and Head Engineer about progress, never mentioning that he's not camping on the peak. Kevin is writing his report for the week: this many kilos of sand removed from the tank, that many liters of water carried up the mountain and flushed through the tank. The sort of details that show how miserable his life has become. He's looking for a typewriter and more paper in the chapel's office when he sees Father Jean. Kevin hasn't talked to Henri or Panielle in weeks and asks about them. Fr. Jean smiles and playfully punches Kevin on his shoulder, "Opsec! They have their own mission from God. All is well."

Since Kevin is contributing to the base community, they've made him a member. The community's center is the village of Ti Legliz and consists of seven ti groupma with 20 – 30 people in each. These little groups are scattered strategically at all the passes and trails that make their way up the mountain to the base community. Young children are trained as runners to pass intelligence and logistics details between the groups. Each ti groupma combines its cash to buy seed and supplies. Then they harvest and bring the crops to the silo at Ti Legliz village. When market prices are favorable, they arrange for a truck to come collect their harvest and take it to the markets in Port or Ceyes. The profits are shared after a 20% allocation to the emergency fund. Ti Legliz has been coordinating with other villages to build a 20 km road, used by 40,000 people in surrounding counties.

What's left of the Government of Haiti has no interest in leaving the main roads or wandering around in the mountains trying to tax small villages. They pretend they don't know what's happening while the base community builds infrastructure around them. But the existing power structure needs the peasants to remain poor and helpless, so the Duvalierists use their old Macoute death squads to terrorize any community that organizes itself economically.

The Ti Legliz community has a policy of full participation in governance. Everyone must come to the weekly group meetings, usually held after Sunday worship services. But even though the community is led by Catholic religious, they welcome anyone if they agree to the rules of governance. Each ti groupma elects a committee of three for coordination and decision making. If there are discipline problems, the group handles that on their own. Usually, the offending member will lose recreation privileges and will perform an act of service to the community, before regaining full voting status. No one is expelled but may be encouraged to leave after too many infractions. Beyond that, the priests don't want to know unless there's actual bloodshed involved. In addition, each member who is not disabled, widowed, or orphaned, is expected to contribute roughly one US dollar to the co-op each month to cover incidentals and hopefully, an annual celebration on St. John Bosco's birthday.

Jè stops in every few weeks to bring Kevin supplies and take his progress reports back to the station. Sometimes, Solange asks him to pass packages to Jè, but Kevin never asks for details. Solange runs a small army of kids as informants all over the province. Most information is exchanged orally, but the runners also carrying notes with them. Since colonial times, the spoken language of Haitian Creole has been suppressed and all official documents have been in the French language. The Aristide government is proposing that Haitian Creole be adopted as one of the country's official languages. But since that allows peasants to do business without a clerk, priest, or pastor to document and tax every transaction, the reaction from Big Business is predictable. Now even Creole Bibles are considered subversive.

Ti Legliz have been using their hand-cranked mimeograph machine to copy and distribute pamphlets in nearby communities. They've collected a variety of Creole language guides on how to setup cooperatives, organize a labor union, and the UN Declaration of Human Rights. Jè and Solange approach Kevin with an idea to get the materials mass-produced. The station has a storage closet filled with missionary photocopiers that don't work anymore. If Jè and Kevin can get one of them working, they can run a printing shop at the station and distribute from their Carrefour house.

Amid all this, there's also great debate and inevitable shouting about the Constitution that the Ti Legliz community will ratify in June. It's quite radical and gives equal rights to men and women, regardless of whether they worship Protestant, Catholic, Voodoo, or none of the gods.

Kevin never makes any suggestions and doesn't intend to vote, but asks a lot of questions to make sure he understands all the implications of this egalitarian approach.

The Protestant transmitter is working again and now the station is clamoring for Kevin to return to Carrefour. Head Engineer's family has already left the country for summer vacation. But until Kevin gets back from the provinces, he can't leave. Tim doesn't trust the Haitian staff without American supervision. Aristide has been inaugurated and other than breaking up the military and police into two different entities and thanking the women of Haiti for their sacrifice, none of the missionary nightmares have come true.

Despite its rocky start, the Aristide government is getting itself together and the poor people who swept the Lavalas party into power are starting to see how democracy can help them. Nevertheless, Protestant leaders are resisting all the changes including ratification of the Haitian Constitution. Kevin fumes about this when it comes up and wonders why anyone would want to live in a country without a bill of rights. But without fail, a Haitian will eventually remind Kevin that, "The Constitution is paper. The bayonet is steel. Only we and Bon Dieu can save us."

Choices

Ti Legliz Village

Now that his mission has been accomplished, Jè suggests that Kevin return to the station the following weekend. Kevin tries to argue that he should finish up a few more projects, but Father Jean points out that Ti Legliz has learned enough about AM/FM radio from Kevin, "You've already documented the maintenance schedule in Kreyòl. We've got this." Kevin asks about Henri. Father Jean replies, "We're not sure when he'll be back. He's been in contact by radio but hasn't mentioned his location. We've got this. No need for goodbyes, we'll see you soon." Then he grins, "But if you could stop by the orphanage and replace their batteries before you leave, that would be greatly appreciated."

St. John Bosco Orphanage

Kevin's departure day arrives and after packing up his remaining gear, he goes to the community's orphanage to wait for his ride with Jè. He's carrying spare backup batteries for their last functioning PC. Solange is already there when he arrives and he greets her. She smiles briefly, nods, and returns to her discussion with the kitchen staff about how many supplies they'll need for the next day. Due to all the zenglando attacks in the region, there are many more lost children than the orphanage was ever built to accommodate. Solange keeps a list of parents for the kids' later return. But this assumes the parents are still alive, which is increasingly rare.

Kevin hears children crying as he passes Solange and makes his way to the orphanage office area. In the hallway, he meets an older woman in a light-blue nun's habit. "Bon jour, my name is Sister Maureen. Can I help you?" Kevin smiles at the question, "I need all the help I can get, but it looks like you're busy enough. I'm Kevin and I'll be heading back to Port after I change these batteries. Why haven't we met before?" Sister Maureen smiles, "I think we may have a mutual friend." Kevin's chuckles, "The world is such a small place." Sister Maureen continues, "After you're finished with those batteries, it would be great if you could spend some time with the toddlers. They don't know you're blan and won't be afraid." She grins at Kevin as her eyes move quickly around the room, "It's nice to meet you. Maybe we'll see each other at Mother Mary's some time." With that, Sr. Maureen sweeps down the hallway and Kevin hears her warm voice reminding the children to hold hands, hug, and sing together with Baby Jesus whenever they feel sad or afraid.

Kevin swaps out the backup batteries for the PC, reconnects the trickle charger and carries the old batteries to the front gate. As he drops the last on the ground by the gate, a toddler bursts out the front door, runs across the porch, and leaps into his arms. He doesn't recognize the little boy but carries him back into the main living area. Kevin has never seen so many kids in one place. Children are crying and running in all directions. There are twice the usual amount of community members helping out, but they are clearly overwhelmed by the scale of the problem. No raised voices from the adults though. The little boy in Kevin's arms has locked his arms around his neck, so there's no putting him down anyway.

Kevin looks for Sister Maureen, hoping she can take the young boy from his arms. She's surrounded by a swarm of kids so he looks around for another adult to help. Another nun

recognizes Kevin and approaches, “Oh, thank God. You found him. Every time he gets a chance, he runs outside thinking his father has returned.” Kevin asks about the boy’s father. The nun quickly shakes her head and says, “His name is Jedi, because he arrived on a Thursday. We have no idea who his family is but he keeps crying “Papa” when he wakes up screaming. Can you just hold him for a while?” Before Kevin can answer, the nun moves away toward a cluster of boys that are fighting over something on the kitchen floor.

Struggling to hold back his own tears, Kevin takes the sobbing Jedi out onto the veranda and sits in a porch swing, eventually rocking the small child to sleep. Kevin dozes too and awakens when he hears the Geo’s tires crunching on the gravel outside. Kevin glances at his watch and realizes that it’s getting quite late. Jè quickly loads the batteries and Kevin can tell he’s in a hurry to leave. Kevin looks around for someone to take the sleeping child. There’s no one nearby, but Jedi starts to stir and awakens with a small cry. He pushes his face deep into Kevin’s chest and wraps his little arms as far as he can around him, “Papa? Papa?” Seeing no alternative, Kevin gently places Jedi on the porch swing. He starts whimpering and clutches Kevin’s neck, so he has to gently pry the little fingers apart before standing. As he starts to back away, Jedi jumps down from the swing and wraps his arms around Kevin’s leg.

Having no idea what to do, Kevin hears Jè approach but doesn’t look up. He just pats the boy on top of his head. A few moments later, Jè returns with Solange who smiles gently at Kevin, “I’ve got him.” As she leans down to pick Jedi up, her t-shirt slips over her shoulder and Kevin sees that her back is covered with scars from cigarette burns. She settles Jedi against her hip and pulls her t-shirt back into position around her neck. Solange looks back at Kevin as his eyes lift from her scars. She says nothing, but nods and adds softly, “You don’t know how much you just meant to Jedi. Please go with God.” Kevin wipes his face, exhales forcefully, and looks back up at her, “M’ ale. Hope to see you soon.”

As Kevin turns away, Jedi senses that he’s leaving and begins to wriggle in Solange’s arms, his little hands reaching toward Kevin. The Geo starts up behind him and Solange waves briefly at Jè through the windshield. Holding Jedi against her chest and singing a lullaby in his ear, she looks at Kevin and waves at him too. Then she gently puts Jedi onto his feet, takes his hand, and leads him back inside. As the screen door closes behind them, Jedi looks back at Kevin

expectantly. Kevin replies sadly, “Mwen regret sa. M’ bezuin ale.” The boy begins to sob deeply, wrapping his arms around himself as Kevin turns away and walks toward the waiting Geo.

Jè is watching him closely from behind the wheel. After getting his gear into the back of the SUV, Kevin walks around to the passenger side door and gets in. The orphanage door bursts open again and Jedi runs across the yard to the fence. Through his tears, Kevin sees the boy smile wanly and then wave his little hand at Kevin. Jedi mouths to him, “Ou ap tounen?” Kevin nods his head “M’a tounen,” knowing he’ll never see this child again and hoping that God will forgive yet another lie. Jè turns the Geo around and as they start down the hill from Ti Legliz he asks Kevin, “You ok?” Kevin sighs deeply and replies, “No and probably never will be.” After a bit of silence, Kevin lights a cigarette and Jè quietly asks, “Do you remember that old proverb I taught you?” Kevin exhales a plume of smoke out the window and laughs ruefully, “The rock in the river can never know the pain of the rock in the sun?” Jè nods and looks at Kevin before returning his eyes to the road, “That’s the one.”

Survival

Carrefour

After returning with Jè, Kevin settles into a new routine at the station. The Head Engineer has postponed his vacation and Tim is busy in Petionville, setting up soft rock station for the upper classes. Making everything less difficult, Kevin has also solved his transportation problem. Jè helped him work out a complicated deal with a few local mechanics who can fix anything. They buy two broken-down Russian Ladas from a Cuban man and talk Tim into giving them the station’s abandoned Lada. The mechanics combine parts from all three to create one functioning Lada for Kevin and one for themselves.

There’s no safety inspection required in Haiti. As long as the Lada keeps running, Kevin is mobile. Most importantly, he’s not reliant on the station’s motorcycles anymore. A friend paid another friend at the Department of Motor Vehicles and now Kevin has a valid Haitian driver

license. The friend was a missionary, so they agree no bribes should be paid. But there's nothing wrong with paying a "tax and customary fee". That's how Kevin writes up the expense report.

Jè and Kevin are making do with a gravity-fed water system. They've placed a 55-gallon drum on their roof and use a hand pump to fill it from a rain cistern. Unfortunately, Haiti is in a severe drought so there hasn't been any rain. It's late evening and getting a bit cooler when they discover that the shower is dry and the toilet won't flush. They climb up onto the roof and find that the drum is dry and the cistern is empty. The radio station has been paying for tank trucks of water to keep their swimming pool filled and toilets flushing, but there is so little water anywhere that the station has been using the compound pool as a cistern.

To say that Kevin and Jè are out of options is putting it mildly. As they stand on the roof wondering what to do, Jè begins to pray out loud. It's a prayer he's used before, but Kevin never paid close attention. It's not really a Christian prayer in the usual sense of "Thou" and "Art" and "Amen" and so forth, but more of a hymn. Before Kevin can ask Jè about it, the wind shifts suddenly and a cloud bank moves in from over the ocean toward Carrefour. The clouds open and a cool, soaking rain begins to fall. Kevin looks at Jè and says, "You didn't need to wait until now to summon rain. It doesn't have to be this exciting!" Then they hug and laugh and agree that God's grace is good.

A few days later, the cistern is refilled but Kevin decides it's unwise to rely on Jè as his only source of rain. He arranges to have a submersible pump shipped from Miami and pays a local man to dig a well in front of their house. It was quite impressive the first time Kevin plugged in the pump and it started gushing water into the street. Unfortunately, the pump was so powerful and the well too shallow that it could only fill a handful of buckets before the well went dry. After trying this a few times with no new results, Kevin is resigned to waiting for rain.

But Haitians are not so easily deterred. Before long, Jè has arranged a system with the neighborhood, where the kids and women with water buckets can just wait on the front porch until the well refills. Then refill their buckets in the shade, before carrying them back home across the street or around the corner. It's much more efficient than dragging five-gallon buckets along the dusty roads. Kevin learns that one five-gallon bucket of water is the maximum unit of measure for each water carrier. It's the most a child can reasonably carry and all that those waiting will tolerate, before it's the next person's turn.

The whole situation becomes a source of entertainment for the neighborhood and every few hours, a new crowd forms to see how many buckets the pump will spit out this time. It's a great way for Kevin to meet the neighbors and now everyone knows him. Without comment, Jè has hooked up a remote switch, so that even when they're not home, anyone who needs water can reach inside their "fe foje" iron bar security system (or "house cage" as Kevin calls it), turn on the pump, and see if there's water available.

Before the water pump, Kevin and Jè were sort of a community joke. But now their water pump is providing water to all the houses within a few blocks. Instead of being "the white guy and his Haitian friend" they are now two pillars of the community. Kevin is able to move freely throughout Carrefour because when people see the Lada or the Geo, they just assume it's both of them inside.

While Kevin was on Mount Boeffe, his NGO negotiated a new agreement with Tim and the station's board. Kevin will transition out of his role at the station to assist with other NGO Tech projects in Haiti. But he should remain available for emergency situations. Kevin quickly agrees to this, since Jè is perfectly capable of handling any emergencies that can be solved without guns or money. In Haiti, lawyers are rarely needed.

ACT III – PERFORMING

PART SIX: BETRAYAL

Observers

July – August 1991

Port-au-Prince

The new arrangement between Kevin's NGO and the station's board has changed his day-to-day activities. His new mission is to be tour guide, interpreter, and "our man in Haiti" for recent blan arrivals. The Aristide government is a focus of interest for the usual suspects, for reasons not that new in Haiti's history as the first African slave revolt-then-Republic. With all the journalists, cartel soldiers, spies, humanitarians, and US agencies coming into Port on every flight, the bars and restaurants are packed and the cost of liquor and cigarettes have skyrocketed. Still no condoms though. Still a Catholic country. If you know a guy, they're available at black market prices but without expiration dates.

Since Kevin and his friends stopped drinking top shelf long ago, they are mostly unaffected. Marlboros and Johnny Walker? Forget it. Local cigarettes and 3-star Barbancourt rum? No problem. Gunfire is common despite the supposed truce between Lavalas, the Duvalierists, and the military. No one wears seat belts anymore because there's a lot more risk from stray bullets than an auto accident. Everyone avoids driving at night. The price of fuel and strategic value of darkness leave the city without electricity most of the time. Can't be with the one you love? Love the one you're with.

Then there are the observer delegations from all points in Christendom on their tours of misery and mercy. Since Ashley, Matt, and Kevin work for faith-adjacent NGO's, they're constantly shepherding blan delegations back and forth to the airport. The safest restaurants and hotels are in Petionville and every delegation needs a good dinner party, so Kevin spends more time there than in Carrefour. Most itineraries include the Montana Hotel, which has two bartenders on duty around the clock. After the tourists are safely asleep in their hotels and guest

houses each evening, Kevin and his NGO friends usually end up in the Montana bar, exchanging war stories about their hopeless delegations. They quickly adopt the term “JAFO” as a catch-all for anyone who is Just Another F-ing Observer.

While drinking an Irish coffee one morning and waiting for his group to collect itself in the Montana lobby, Kevin sees Jocelyn talking with Ashley outside the main hotel conference room. Before he can make his way over to them and say hello, Jocelyn is back inside the room. Ashley has collected her flock and sees Kevin in the lobby. They hug briefly and Kevin asks about Jocelyn. She’s already moving toward the exit but calls back, “Long, amazing story. Will tell you later.” Then he collects his own delegation and leads them outside to the waiting buses.

International Airport

It’s late one morning at the airport and Kevin is waiting for a missionary group from Miami while slightly hungover. He’s found a good spot to watch the arrivals and he’s early. A flight from New York arrives and a delegation emerges into the bright sun with their bags and carts. The midday heat stuns them as they put on sun glasses and dig out their paperwork. A few dozen street kids descend on them offering cheap taxis and baggage handling while trying to pick their pockets. Kevin tries to identify the gang’s ringleader. He’ll pay him to keep the kids at a distance when his group arrives.

The flight from Miami arrives and a mix of Haitian and American passengers begin exiting the airport. The Haitians move quickly to their waiting vehicles while the Americans knot together in small groups with their piles of luggage. The street kids mix in with the Americans like sharks among baby seals. At the head of the largest group of Americans is a tall black guy wearing a LA Dodgers ball cap. From his clothing and height, Kevin can see he’s African-American but the street kids aren’t picking up on this. The white folk are yelling things to LA Dodgers in their southern drawls. In his own west coast accent, he’s asking them to repeat themselves. They seem to expect him to magically communicate with the Haitians. Kevin watches him shrug his shoulders, his facial expression saying “How should I know?”. Then LA Dodgers grabs his bags and makes his way toward the waiting line of taxis and passenger vans.

The Haitian street kids sense that the white Americans don't trust LA Dodgers. This convinces them that he's Haitian and since he won't speak Creole, they accuse him of being a traitor to his people. LA Dodgers finally just laughs and calls out "M pakab pale Creole!" Mwen se Ameriken". Then he pulls an LA Lakers towel from his bag and puts it around his neck. Suddenly he's like a celebrity and the Haitian kids start practicing their English with him. They shout lyrics from NWA and Public Enemy. Some shout "Fuck LAPD!" which horrifies everyone except LA Dodgers, who doubles over laughing. Eventually a driver appears with a sign and leads everyone to a nearby bus. LA Dodgers fist bumps the Haitian kids and climbs in last.

Kevin's delegation is a youth group from a church in Ohio, chaperoned by a middle-aged couple. He introduces himself and the couple explains that they're here to build a school somewhere in Hinche. They don't know the specific location but have the name of a local camion company. A Haitian man approaches with the company's name on a placard. He gestures to a large school bus camion, introduces himself as their driver, and asks where they're going. When he hears that their destination is Hinche, the driver becomes visibly nervous and protests to Kevin that the area is "Tre cho!". Kevin agrees and suggests that they get the blan into the school bus so they won't get robbed, while he sorts everything out. Then he takes the couple aside, "My NGO only gave me your flight number. What else can you tell me?" Church Couple argue their way to an explanation. It seems their church raised funds and shipped supplies to a church in Hinche a few months ago. But they lost contact when all the "political trouble" started. They're hoping Kevin can help them find that church and their supplies. They need to build the school and return to the US in a week.

Someone named Pastor Joel was supposed to meet them at the airport but they're not certain he received their flight details. Kevin is their backup contact. Keeping his voice low to avoid alarming the kids, Kevin explains to the couple "Hinche is half a day north of here and it's already getting late." They look at him with blank stares as he continues, "It's very remote with no paved roads. The zenglando haven't been pacified up there and are having daily gun fights with the Haitian military." Church Couple looks at him in bewilderment, "Zenglando? Gun fights? We're not getting involved in any of that!" Husband looks at Kevin as if just noticing that he's not much older than the youth group, "Your NGO said you're their fixer down here. But if it's so hard to get to Hinche, how do you know any of this?" He looks at Wife and back to Kevin triumphantly. Kevin blinks, raises an eyebrow, and smiles thinly, "Radio Protestant has a

transmitter up there. I've made the trip but only by motorcycle and NOT during the rainy season, which is what we call this time of year. Unless you're in a military convoy, they'll shoot first and never bother to ask questions. And since I'll be with you, I agree we shouldn't get involved in any of that."

Since everyone is already loaded and Church Couple is staring at him in stunned silence, Kevin steps out of the bus to smoke a cigarette and consider options. He finishes the cigarette and steps back into the bus. "If your supplies made it to Hinche, chances are someone has already used them. Possibly to build that school." The couple both open their mouths to protest but Kevin interrupts them, "I have another idea that will be safer for all of us. The location is nearby so you won't spend half your week bouncing around in this school bus." He explains his proposal and since no one has any other ideas, the bus follows his Lada north from the airport to a small village in the mountains.

One of Kevin's friends works for a non-profit called NGO Housing. They're running a huge project to build this entire village from the ground up. No one expects the bus full of Americans but there's plenty of work to go around. Kevin's friend settles the group into some available dorm rooms and everyone seems happy with the arrangement. Kevin reminds Church Couple that they'll need to get back to the airport without him and makes his exit. As he's climbing into his Lada, his NGO friend bangs on the cargo door, opens it, and pushes a crate into the cargo area. She leans in his driver side window, "Thanks for the conscripted labor!" Laughing, they exchange cheek kisses and remind each other to stay safe. When Kevin gets back to his apartment and looks in the back of the Lada, he discovers a whole case of Barbancourt 3-star. Not a bad day. Hope LA Dodgers is doing OK.

Huddled Masses

North of Port-au-Prince

Bon Chance Refugee Camp

After finishing up some meetings in Petionville a few days later, Kevin receives a panicked request via Tele-Joel to place a collect call to NYC. He finds a Telco, pays the “seating fee” to wait for a phone and makes the call. He’s connected to a woman from a church that donates to NGO Tech. Apparently, they are escorting several hundred Haitian cane workers back from the Dominican Republic. They don’t have a plan for when they get to Haiti, which is why they need his advice. Kevin quickly advises that they turn around before they cross the border, but learns that they’ve already talked their way past the Haitian border guards. The refugees have been deposited at the Bon Chance government refugee camp. The American “facilitators” needed to return to Miami but were unable to make arrangements with the camp staff.

Before Kevin can interrupt, she goes on at great length to explain that the DR regime was expelling entire Haitian families and it’s such a relief to get the group safely into Bon Chance. When she takes a breath, Kevin explains that the refugee situation is common knowledge. Did she know that the Haitian government has no funds and everyone in that camp is already starving to death? Since she doesn’t have anything to say about that, Kevin asks if she knows this DR-initiated crisis is an intentional tactic to overwhelm and destabilize Haiti’s democratically elected government. After a lot of crackling silence on the line, Kevin adds that if churches are unwittingly compounding the problem it might be best if they stop trying to be the solution. Then the line is cut.

Kevin considers dismissing the whole situation as someone else’s bad decision but decides he can’t live with that. The next day, he goes to the Bon Chance camp to see what’s going on. Before he’s even figured out who’s in charge, his Lada is surrounded with shouting, angry people, who see his tool kit and lead him to their power generator. After convincing them that the fuel tank is empty and he can’t fix that, another person leads Kevin across the camp in the opposite direction from his SUV. They weave through the dozen or so squat cement buildings that used to be a mission school campus. Every open door shows at least four curtained off

sleeping areas with multiple cots inside. The desks and chairs have already been turned into firewood and the blackboards are the only reminders that the refugee camp was once a school.

They pass a line of Haitian women over large cauldrons of rice and beans and turn the corner to see an endless food line stretching across a soccer field and around the corner of a building 100 meters away. Just then, a fight breaks out in the food line. Two young boys tumble into the dirt and roll around until one screams as the other bites into his ear lobe and tears it away with his teeth. Blood flows but no one intervenes. Kevin's escort tells him it's "pa gro bagay." The kids have no parents. No one will make trouble.

They finally arrive at the camp's medical clinic. It's a small room in the school's former admin building. Kevin's escort pushes him inside and then disappears. The clinic is crowded, with a line of waiting patients outside. A very tired looking government doctor is being assisted by a young French nurse. The nurse has just arrived in country. Her French allows her to communicate with the doctor. But she doesn't understand or speak Creole, so she can't communicate directly with the patients. A Haitian man approaches Kevin and introduces himself as Pastor Tomas. He's one of the pastors the church brought here. They've been having problems getting medical care due to language barriers with the staff. The Haitian cane workers were living in the DR so long that their Creole is now mixed with Spanish and most local Haitians can't understand their dialect.

The doctor, nurse, and Pastor Tomas all start speaking in their own languages at the same time and then look at Kevin expectantly. He asks them to explain again; slowly and one at a time. Eventually, Kevin pieces together the problem. One of the children who came with the group has a severe throat infection. The doctor hasn't prescribed any antibiotics. Instead of reminding them that he has no medical knowledge and is only competent with English, Kevin jumps in and tries his best to be the interpreter for everyone. There's a lot of shouting and hand waving and Kevin quickly becomes overwhelmed. He asks everyone to calm down and repeat things slowly but that seems to panic everyone more. If he doesn't understand, why is he here? But Kevin's into it now and can't bring himself to call a timeout.

Everyone finally agrees that the child should receive antibiotics. The doctor's concern is that the child may not take all the pills. Kevin finally gets frustrated and announces, "Fine! I'll take accountability. Just give me the pills." However, by the time all the arguing has stopped, it

escapes everyone's attention that the sick child is an infant who can't swallow anything because of her throat infection. Kevin only learns this when he returns to the family's corner of a classroom with some penicillin tablets. He watches helplessly as the parents try to get the little girl to swallow them. Then he has to attend her funeral on behalf of the NGO that created the entire mess in the first place.

After that disastrous performance, Kevin doesn't expect to get any more phone calls from the US. But despite his inadequacies and lack of experience with refugee resettlement, Kevin is the only English/Creole speaker on his NGO's staff. Kevin writes up a report on the child's death, which finds its way to the Aristide government. A commission is formed to investigate the camp's conditions. It includes any disaster aid NGO's that still have grant money and a collection of new officials from the GOH. USAID takes one look at the whole situation and says, "No thanks."

Due to his previous relationships with some of the GOH officials, Kevin finds himself negotiating with the Ministry of Cults, the Red Cross, and dozens of NGO representatives. They're all concerned about the situation in the camp but Kevin is the only member of the entire commission who's actually set foot in the place. After a very long meeting with lots of high-minded rhetoric about the importance of integrating the refugees into Haitian culture, Kevin has had enough. When the NGO and GOH experts have finally stopped theorizing, Kevin clears his throat and says, "It's obviously important that we think about the long term. But if we don't do something to help these people right now, they'll be too dead to immerse themselves in anything."

But even after that, Kevin keeps getting invited to meetings and his NGO keeps finding new ways to dig him in deeper. Even though he's been in country less than a year, Kevin's reports about the coup and human rights atrocities are thorough and difficult to ignore. This brings him to the attention of other audiences as "someone who knows things" but more dangerously, "someone who will tell things". Unfortunately, the audience taking the most notice seems to be at the US Embassy. Kevin learns from several reliable sources that his name is on their list of "human rights and democracy advocates." As his Haitian friends remind him, it's not good to be on that list.

Despite all the distractions, Kevin is able to stay in touch with Pastor Tomas at Bon Chance. Conditions are atrocious but there is nowhere else for the refugees to go, since few have friends or family in Haiti. Kevin works out an arrangement with Pastor Tomas' wife, Esperanza. Her Creole is very mixed with Spanish, so Kevin struggles to understand her and she him. But since Esperanza is responsible for getting supplies from the nearby market, they quickly learn to communicate with lists and prices. Kevin gets his NGO to send funds through his personal checking account, so he can take cash to Pastor Tomas and Esperanza. At this point, his Lada often contains about a year's worth of Haitian wages, wrapped in old newspapers under a box of Bibles. Kevin prefers the French Bibles. Thieves love those because they're worth more on the secondary market.

Because language barriers continue to cause problems in the camp and Kevin's learned that lesson, he starts bringing Jè and Solange along to help. NGO Tech agrees to pay them as translators. Esperanza and Solange become friends instantly. They quickly organize the women in Bon Chance and living conditions start to improve. Kevin and Jè are at the camp one day, when Kevin suggests bringing Henri in to meet with the group. Jè thinks for a while, "I don't think so. Henri isn't really anonymous anymore. He's been so effective that the Macoutes know him in the south, just like in the north." Jè pauses and looks like he's wrestling with something before continuing, "And honestly Kevin, you're so visible in that Lada. I hope you know you're being followed every time you leave the camp." Kevin's face pales, "Are you serious?" Jè nods, "There's a new sheriff in town..."

They agree that Kevin should continue handling all the meetings with concerned NGO and alphabet agencies. Since Kevin owns the only typewriter, Solange promotes him to "Cultural Attache". Jè and Solange will keep working discretely with Pastor Tomas and Esperanza to get the Dominican-Haitians out of the camp, but not before the group has a chance of survival outside. They'll contact Kevin by radio if he's needed to negotiate with the camp administrators. But no matter what side you're on, meetings must happen and those meetings should be in a comfortable setting. This keeps Kevin quite busy in Petionville but at least he's not driving back and forth to Carrefour every day.

PART SEVEN: MEN WITH GUNS

Martial Law

September 30, 1991

Petionville Apartment

Zero-dark-thirty.

Kevin jolts awake, his heart racing. He lies still and a few beats later, hears gunfire. He's asking himself whether if the shots were real or just the neighbor kids raising hell again, when several staccato cracks convince him this is the real deal. He scrambles to find his lantern and is looking for matches when he remembers that his mosquito net is over his bed. Ripping the thin fabric aside, he gives up on the matches and makes his way toward his closed window.

The apartment that he's house-sitting is in a round, three story bunker-looking building one block from the Petionville police station. It has a great view of the bay and airport lying miles below at sea level. Kevin's apartment is half of the circle. In an ingenious architectural and functional design, the "windows" in the apartment are actually tinted plexiglass screens that slide up and down inside the cinder block wall. Dim light is showing through the screen and he can't find his watch, so he cracks the window open and peeks outside.

The first thing he notices is that it's not pre-dawn, but very dark. He listens and hears a few distant generators but sees no electric lights of any kind. But the air is cool and he pulls the window open, gropes his way to the kitchen table to find his matches, and a flashlight that actually works. He goes back to his bed and retrieves the lantern, finds that it has some kerosene and decides to light it and save the flashlight batteries. Eventually he finds his watch and sees that it's now 5:30 AM. Some dim sunlight is starting to come into his window which is disorienting, since the morning sun is usually much brighter this time of year.

Then he hears the church bells. They should not be ringing on the half hour, much less before the idiot roosters get started. He realizes that under the cacophony of every bell ringing like the end of the world, the gunfire has become quite sustained. It's hard to tell how far away now, but

Kevin has an uneasy feeling that this is not just another day in tropical paradise. He eyes the half-empty bottle of 3-star on the counter. He decides it's the wrong kind of 5:00 and checks the levels in his water filtration apparatus instead. Since it's too early to get coffee at any of the nearby cafes, he connects his last bottle of butane and fires up his camp stove to get some coffee brewing.

Luckily, he remembered to charge his solar panel yesterday, so his boom box external battery pack is all green LED's. Someone has permanently borrowed his Public Enemy disc while leaving the empty jewel case. He looks in the CD tray to see that Joshua Tree is still there and hits Play. Kevin sits down at his small table with a cup of coffee and croissant. No cheese. He doesn't have a refrigerator and Marie (the apartment maid) usually shops each day. He never keeps a lot on hand, except some Hormel chili and a local hot sauce that will make Texans cry.

It's 7 AM as U2 is hitting the groove in "Bullet the Blue Sky". Kevin realizes that the church bells have stopped ringing and the gunfire is now very close. No more pops and cracks, but the continuous roar of automatic weapons. It's well after daybreak, so he makes his way back to the open window and looks outside. On a clear day, the view would be of the bay and La Gonave beyond. But today, he can't see anything except a smoky haze. The wind shifts and Kevin coughs at the sudden gust of tire smoke. He's lighting a cigarette when he hears a loud, "Bllaaattt" from the street below.

He hears a woman scream and peeks over the top of the window screen to see three heavily armed men in full combat gear and the new US-style helmets. Kevin's surprised at this and can't remember ever seeing a Haitian soldier in anything but those old WW2 GI helmets. His thoughts are interrupted when the rear guard of the three looks back over his shoulder and sees Kevin watching from high above. The soldier shouts something, spins toward Kevin, drops to one knee and raises his assault rifle, its suppressor looking like a beer can at the end of its barrel. The other two soldiers spin and drop just as quickly. Before Kevin can do much more than flinch back from the window, a stream of bullets flies past his head and into the concrete above his window. A few other rounds whiz past with a zipping sound and shred the palm tree that shade Kevin's window. Kevin makes his way back to his bed. He falls into it and shakes his way through a massive adrenaline dump before returning to the kitchen for that bottle of rum.

Road to La Boule Mountain.

Kevin has his Lada loaded with anything that will fit inside and is on the road up the mountain from Petionville. He's aiming for a big guest house in La Boule, where some friends are house-sitting for an American family. The family was andeyo when rumors of coups became too loud. They decided not to return until after the New Year and asked Kevin's friends to keep house-sitting until they get back. There was no mention of the bar and wine cellar, so his friends have been working their way through those perishables and running an endless house party. It's drawn in every outlaw and subversive who finds himself between projects or other schemes. Kevin even sees Henri briefly at one of the weekend parties. Henri gives him a quick smile and nod, before ducking into a nearby room. Kevin never mentions this to anyone because who needs to know?

The road to La Boule is carved into the side of the steep mountain range that towers above Port-au-Prince itself. It's easy to forget that people live up here, because the mountain is usually shrouded in fog and mist. The temperature drops quickly with altitude. Kevin is debating whether to try the Lada heater when he rounds one of the road's hairpins and sees a black Mitsubishi Pajero slowing ahead of him. Kevin downshifts and begins to slow as the Pajero stops. Solders disembark with their weapons pointed in every direction including Kevin's. He slams on the brakes and comes to a full stop approximately 30 yards behind the SUV.

Kevin sees what has stopped the soldiers' vehicle. The road is blocked by a barricade of smoldering tires and an overturned delivery truck. One soldier walks a few paces toward Kevin's Lada. Kevin looks in the mirror and sees no one behind him, so he backs up as fast as the soldier is walking. Realizing where this is going, the soldier points his Uzi barrel at Kevin and waves him forward. Instead, Kevin rolls down his window and then places both hands on the wheel. The soldier watches him intently but doesn't move his gun from its casual parade rest position. Kevin slowly leans out the window, making sure not to move his hands. With no visible reaction from the Uzi, Kevin calls out in his best Texas accent, "Hey, Y'all! Which way to the Barban Koon distillery?". The soldier relaxes, drops his Uzi onto its sling around his shoulder and shakes his head, stepping a few paces back from Kevin to provide over watch for the other soldiers.

Road to La Boule

Kevin relaxes slightly and takes the opportunity to light a cigarette, exhaling smoke downwind toward the soldier. The soldier sniffs absently but doesn't take his attention from the road block. Kevin leans out his window a bit farther so he can see what has the soldier's attention. From one of the shanty towns that spill down the embankment below the road, a crowd of women and children are being led at gunpoint up the steep hill toward the road block. Kevin sees that the rest of the soldiers are split into two groups. One is taking cover behind the Pajero with guns pointed at the hill above the road block. The rest are still down in the shanty town, but have about a dozen men lined up in front of a plywood retaining wall. The men are on their knees, hands behind their heads, and a man in civilian clothes is going through all their pockets while the soldiers keep their guns trained on the men's backs.

As the women and children are herded onto the roadway, they begin pulling the tires aside and push them over the bank toward the shanty town. Then as the soldiers kick and beat them, the villagers push the bed of the burned-out truck bed aside until it only blocks the lane nearest the steep cliff on Kevin's right. Then the villagers are shoved and kicked back down the steep bank toward the armed men below. The soldier nearest Kevin slowly turns and stares into his eyes, a smirk on his lips as if to ask "Did you enjoy the show?". Then he waves Kevin ahead with the barrel of his Uzi.

Kevin carefully threads his Lada past the Pajero, then between some pavement chunks that are still strewn across the road surface. He takes care not to get too close to the legs of the soldiers and takes extra, special care not to look down the bank on his left. Traffic is piling up in the downhill direction. Drivers are panicking at the scene they've also been watching and many try to three-point turn their way back up the mountain. Kevin just lays on the horn of the Lada, keeps it in second gear and accelerates until the little Russian engine sounds like it will explode. The other drivers slam on their brakes until he's past. He shifts into third and drives as fast as his tires will allow up the mountain and to the house party that awaits.

The days blur into a chaotic stream of rumors, fear, and boredom. The house party dwindles daily as the NGO's, embassy non-essentials, and unarmed alphabet agencies get their tickets out of the hot zone. Most of the new wave of missionaries have long ago extracted with only the oldest school remaining in their compounds. As a god-damn-independent, unaligned with church

or state, Kevin has decided he'll ride this out until the New Year. He hates Christmas and would rather spend it on a beach than in some icy hellscape. He's getting pressure from back home to regain his senses and return ASAP. But as his NGO's only source of information about the coup's aftermath, he keeps sending reports about human rights abuses that keep people asking for details, so he can go and ask more questions and repeat the process.

He no longer has a radio station press pass but his Haitian driver license is valid for nine more years. His brand-new GOH letters of recommendation and travel documents are worse than useless now. All the Aristide officials who signed anything are in hiding, already on a plane provided by US Embassy, or down a hole in Fort Dimanche prison awaiting their fate. Kevin still has his shortwave radio, sets it up on the dining room table, and someone is scanning and shouting out updates whenever they catch a fragment of news. None of the local stations are on air since journalists have been getting disappeared along with anyone who was ever elected to anything. But Tele-Joel is undeniable and before long it's common knowledge that President Aristide has been arrested by whatever General is in charge now.

This news seems to break something. The shock wave is felt by everyone in Haiti who isn't already celebrating their victory at the Presidential Palace. Every hour, a new wave of panic washes over Kevin and his friends until they settle into a sort of drinking game with each conflicting account of doom. "President Aristide was unharmed." "Ayibobo! He escaped!" "Oh, no. Titid was arrested in his private residence in the wee hours of the coup." "Oh, but good news? Now the US is offering to negotiate Aristide's release" "It's a trap! The Americans were behind the coup." "No, Bush and Carter say it's a real deal." "Oh, well then. I guess the good guys will win one?" "Never mind, they're offering to send him to Africa or some other place andeyo."

After a few days of inactivity in the house and with supplies running low, Kevin and the remaining Americans decide to make a run to Petionville for resupply. They'll take the Lada because it's so ridiculous that the military never considers it a threat. But the rest of the house are Haitian labor organizers and low-level Lavalas fugitives. They explain all the ways the American idea is a terrible plan, mostly because it will put them all at risk if it goes wrong. A healthy debate ensues until someone shouts everyone quiet. Voice of America is advising all Americans to stay inside and shelter in place. The Haitian military has started shooting people on sight.

They've declared a 24 hour, blanket curfew for all of Port-au-Prince. No one is allowed in or out of city limits and the airport is now exclusively for military use. That ends the debate and discussion of rationing begins. Over drinks, of course.

Police State

October 1991

Haiti

The military rounds up what remains of the political opposition and installs a provisional government with vague assurances of future elections. Haiti is open for business again so come on down and place your bets and bribes. In response, the international community places an embargo on fuel sales to Haiti. As soon as a few nights pass without renewed hostilities, the curfew is eased and travel is allowed from dawn to dusk. Black market fuel prices skyrocket and gas lines extend for miles as fuel is rationed to one 5-gallon can per vehicle. Kevin makes his way downtown to the Iron Market to exchange a check for cash, but the market is deserted. Rather than waste gas going to some of the alternative exchanges, he drives back up a side street toward Petionville.

Kevin's hoping to avoid the police checkpoints on Delmas, but now a military truck is behind him on this narrow street. It's following so closely he can't even see its headlights. Kevin pulls over and waves the truck past but its driver stops and waits for him to continue. After another failed attempt to let them overtake, he speeds up and gets some distance. Slowing to take a sharp turn, Kevin sees a man lying on the street, his features bloody and swollen from a heavy beating. Kevin swerves, takes his foot off the accelerator, and looks for a place to pull over and help. Suddenly the military truck rounds the turn behind him and drives straight for the man in the street. Instead of slowing, Kevin says a silent prayer for forgiveness and drives on.

Running out of cash and without contacts who can access fuel, Kevin spends most of his time in his apartment. He's been working his way through reports of every imaginable human rights

abuse. No one recalls a time when so many men have been murdered and so many women and children brutalized with such impunity. The first-hand reports from survivors are harrowing. Kevin's been trying to translate and transcribe them. But after a few weeks of not much sleep, he realizes the emotional toll is too great. The next time he links up with Father Vitor, he hands over the tapes and partial transcriptions. "I don't think I'm going to be able to do this anymore", he explains. Fr. Vitor looks at him closely with sad eyes and then nods reassuringly, "Not a problem. We'll have one of the brothers do that here." He shakes Kevin's hand and then hugs him, "Go with God. Now please get some rest!"

Henri, Jè, and Solange combine the accounts of human rights abuse from Fr. Vitor with their own materials for distribution to resistance groups. No one has the full list of groups. As arranged during their 6:00 radio check-ins, Kevin meets with Jè at Radio Protestant's new Petionville studio to discuss "technical issues". They exchange sealed envelopes with code names on each. Kevin distributes the envelopes along with some cash. Only he knows the total amount and accounts for it creatively on his expense reports.

Kevin is making a delivery to some friends of Father Vitor who are hiding out in a house near the Cathedral. While Kevin is chatting in the kitchen, one of the lookouts calls from the front window and motions for Kevin to join him. They peer out between curtains and see a soldier searching the glove compartment of Kevin's Lada. The lookout asks, "Do you need to get out of here another way?" Kevin watches the soldier for a few seconds before chuckling darkly, "Nothing in there but some French Bibles".

The lookout laughs nervously but doesn't say anything in reply. Kevin's face falls into a serious expression, "I'm sorry about all this. I'm leading the Macoutes to you now." The lookout quickly changes the subject and asks him to stay for a meal. Kevin declines but leaves some cash by the door when he leaves. The lookout sees this and starts to protest. Kevin smiles and makes a time out gesture with his hands. "It's just ti kob. Don't know when I'll be back again. If you don't need it for food, get a box of those Cuban cigars for next time." He shakes hands with the organizers and their families and checks his glove compartment for any surprises left by the soldier. The Lada starts in a plume of smoke and he drives up Delmas toward his apartment.

Out of habit, he almost makes the turn the NGO Education guest house but veers back into the traffic heading toward Petionville. Ashley and Matt have been pulled out of Mirogoane. He

hasn't heard what happened to Jocelyn and Ti Mon. He should find out right now. After considering a U-turn back down the hill, he remembers the guest house is filled with JAFO. Sighing, he lights a cigarette and pulls off the road to get a bottle of Barbancourt before the vendor closes up for the evening. Restarting the SUV, he notices his fuel gauge has fallen to 1/8. Ashley and Matt have somehow kept their Land Cruiser fueled for the cannonball runs back and forth to the airport. The rest of their staff are pulling out but last Kevin heard, they're staying. Rather than siphoning more gas from abandoned missionary vehicles, Kevin decides he'll park the Lada and save fuel for his own exit.

Petionville Park

A few days later, Matt and Kevin park the Land Cruiser along the plaza wall next to the Petionville police station. There hasn't been a general strike in days. After the US Embassy invited everyone to leave, gangs were robbing Americans on the road to the airport. But that's bad for business so the military razed a few slums, slaughtered a few hundred random peasants, and things are just fine again. Life goes on.

Matt's heard that one of their favorite bakeries is open again. They make their way a couple blocks downhill from the park and find that the bakery is indeed open. They grab pastries and hustle back to the truck. As they're climbing in, Kevin sees a handful of street kids approaching. He mentions this to Matt, who gestures up the street at an approaching soldier. They quickly climb into the truck and the kids arrive, just as Kevin is closing his passenger door. The soldier is shouting something and motioning for Matt to drive ahead. Kevin rolls up his window as the first boy tries to get his face close in the window to shout something. One of the other kids pushes him from behind as the truck pulls away. As Kevin finishes rolling up the window, he notices a smear of tears from where the child's face had been.

Matt slowly drives the truck up the street toward the armed man. He's wearing a police uniform, a WW2-style helmet and carries a long rifle with wooden stock and attached bayonet. He twirls his finger to signal that Kevin should roll down his window. Then the soldier taps on the door with his bayonet and gestures for Kevin to let him in the truck. Kevin slides across the bench seat toward Matt as the soldier climbs in with them.

As Matt starts driving the soldier asks, “How are you finding the security?” Kevin’s not sure he’s heard him correctly and looks over at Matt who just raises his eyebrows as if to say, “I have no idea!” Kevin asks him to repeat the question. The soldier leans in very closely with his bayonet pointing everywhere and asks slowly, “How do you like the security?” Kevin replies that it’s fine. Then the soldier continues, “I need you to give me money. It’s very difficult for the armed forces right now.” Matt is slowing for the turn into Delmas. Kevin is completely out of ideas and just replies, “I can’t do that.” The Haitian soldier snorts and says, “You can’t give me anything at all?” Kevin says again, “No, sir.” The truck slows to a near stop and Matt seems frozen at the wheel. The soldier seems to think this means his ride is over, so without further comment he gets out of the truck and walks downhill toward the Army barracks.

They have quite a party at the Guest House that night and Kevin somehow gets back to his apartment. The next morning he’s awakened by the screams of Marie, calling his name over shouts from a man outside. Kevin hurries onto the stairway landing and sees his neighbor shouting at her. “Get out of here! You’re not my maid. I’m tired of seeing you. If I see you again, I’m going to get my gun and shoot you.” Kevin is trying to decide how to respond when Guardian Joel rounds the corner and walks up to the gate. Without comment, he unlocks it so Marie can run upstairs to Kevin’s apartment. Then Joel looks calmly at Kevin’s neighbor and says, “It’s for people like you that we need Aristide to return.”

PART EIGHT: DEFEND

Adapt

November – December 1991

Port-au-Prince, Downtown

The airport is under military control and Kevin's mobility is limited. He avoids public markets, gatherings, or churches and moves between houses frequently. Jè and Henri continue their plan to build out the Ti Legliz comms network. Kevin stays clear of Carrefour and the Ti Legliz base community. Since vehicles are being stopped and searched by anyone with a gun, it would be "imprudent". Besides, he's down to his last gerry-can of gasoline and that's for his final run to the airport.

Jè remains the visible coordinator with Pastor Tomas and the group at Bon Chance. Kevin receives updates during their technical meetings. Solange, Henri, and Panielle have trained deputies who are beginning to organize with surrounding communities. But as visible leaders, they've been targeted again. Panielle learns that he's on the US Embassy list as a Cuban agent which is ridiculous. He can't even speak Spanish and has a French passport. But he says goodbye and disappears immediately. Through his own contacts, Father Jean confirms that Henri is on another death list and can't be seen in the community. Solange still has freedom of movement but only if she dresses as a traditional peasant woman.

The Generals have allowed business to resume and all the black markets thrive. Kevin receives a warning that the military intends to clear out the Bon Chance camp, long considered a hot bed of Lavalas terrorists. Using his own connections, Jè quickly negotiates an agreement to extract Pastor Tomas and his group from the camp. No security will be provided. Kevin never expects any, so he arrives with the trucks to take a head count and distribute cash to each family's head of household. It takes entirely too long to load everyone and before long, the rest of the camp descends on them. Fortunately, Solange and Esperanza had done a census of the families and gave the list to Kevin. With Pastor Tomas and some imposing church deacons at his side, Kevin checks everyone against the list before handing them their envelope. Just as the crowd is turning into a mob, they get everyone in the truck and escape in a cloud of dust and

threats. The military clears the camp the very next day; burning everything and everyone that remains.

Kevin doesn't know where Pastor Tomas' group landed because Jè and Solange each arranged their part and kept everyone else out of the details. NGO Tech quickly agrees it's best that no American knows the location. However, the plight of this group has been well publicized within the NGO Tech network, so they must maintain contact and support. In the end, Jè and Solange remain on staff. Pastor Tomas will contact them when it's safe. This allows Jè to stay in Carrefour when he's not at Ti Legliz.

The station hasn't paid anyone since the coup, so there's barely any programming. Just country and western gospel music and "updates" from the Haitian provisional government. Henri and Solange have been donating all their NGO wages to the Ti Legliz war chest. After a few cryptic calls with the NGO accountants, Kevin types up an expense report with very large, round numbers in Gourde currency for transportation, food, security, housing and contingencies. Then he drops the report into the missionary air-mail bag at the Mission church with a note promising details when he's back in the US.

President Aristide has been forced into exile, so all of Kevin's GOH contacts are in hiding or out of the country. Most of the foreign staff involved in refugee resettlement have already been evacuated. Since the cost of their belongings was covered by their relocation stipends, they leave their things behind when they leave. Kevin has keys to several houses and checks in on them occasionally to make sure there aren't any water leaks. The missionary and NGO groups all insist they will return when it's safe. Since Kevin can't be everywhere and the houses are empty anyway, he uses them as temporary quarters for Haitians who can't get into any of the other safe houses.

One afternoon after a failed attempt to refuel his Lada, Kevin is stopped by a Haitian police officer who gives him a citation. It's in French but Kevin's able to read that he must present himself at the police station before end of today. Kevin thanks the officer for his service and drives back to his apartment to discuss it with Guardian Joel. Joel looks at it very closely before turning back to Kevin with a strange expression, "I'll take care of this." Kevin is surprised, "Can you do that? Settle police summons for me? Do I need to come with you?" Joel shakes his head vigorously, "No, No! It's best that I go alone. You wait here."

Kevin agrees and hangs around the courtyard for a few hours, waiting for Joel to return. When he does, he's wearing a big smile. Kevin asks, "Do I need to go there again? Did you pay the fine for me? Let me pay you back!" Joel laughs, "No need. It was all a misunderstanding. They mistook you for someone else." Kevin is relieved but then asks, "What if I went to the station instead of you?" Joel looks around very carefully to make sure no one is near, "Ou pa tounen."

The next night at a safe house, Kevin casually shares the story while being introduced to some unnamed Haitians, laughing at its ending. The Haitians do not laugh along. The oldest asks, "Do you see what's happening?" Kevin stops laughing when he realizes how serious the man is. He responds hesitantly, "The world is burning and there's no water?" The rest of the house has gathered now and Kevin starts to get the feeling he's on the wrong end of an intervention. The man continues, "You're being followed by the military. The Embassy knows you by name. The police are trying to kidnap you. Are you sure you weren't followed here?" Kevin's face pales as he slowly shakes his head. "I took the usual precautions, but that really only keeps the thieves from following me."

Everyone sits quietly and listens to the mosquitos circling the room. Finally, Kevin asks, "Have I become a liability?" Without hesitation the man replies, "Never. You're family and we worry about you. I know you won't agree to leave Haiti tonight, but will you allow us to pray for your safety?" Kevin laughs harshly, "God stopped caring about any of us long ago!" No one reacts as the man smiles calmly, "Do you trust us?" Kevin looks around at the unfamiliar faces and replies softly, "Yes. I really do." The man nods in satisfaction and gestures toward the surrounding faces. "We'd like to pray for you in the old way. Will you allow that?"

Petionville, Palace Pizzaria

It's late one night, after the blackouts are over for Petionville. Kevin is catching up with Ashley at the Palace Pizzaria, a dive bar that never really closes. What's left of civil and social life is fragmented between rumors of violence, blackouts, and violence. So many friends and trusted colleagues are being disappeared or evacuated, it's impossible to keep up. Standard custom is to leave one empty chair and glass for anyone who should be with them, but cannot be.

They're each finishing a Haitian fruit punch which sounds innocent enough, but is really just rum, rum, rum, and a splash of grenadine juice. After quickly covering the usual topics, Ashley seems to be distracted. She starts to say something but stops when the waitress clears their glasses and leaves a fresh ashtray. Kevin asks, "What's up? You seem somewhere else. Trouble back home?" No answer from Ashley so he asks, "Whatever happened with Jocelyn? You never told me the rest of that story." Ashley smiles wanly and seems to have trouble meeting his eyes. When she doesn't reply he asks again, "Is she OK?"

Ashley takes a deep breath and it all comes out in a jumble. "We took Jocelyn along to a meeting with an American pastor in Petionville. He was building a team to start new churches for "outreach to the upper classes". Our NGO doesn't involve itself in church planting but donors are insisting that we start working with missionary schools. Jocelyn was great in the meeting and by the end, the pastor offered her a full time position as project manager including salary, housing, and sponsorship for a US green card. She reviewed the details with Matt and me later. We were skeptical about such a perfect arrangement but couldn't offer Jocelyn any comparable job. Besides, at some point you have to believe that God gets involved otherwise..."

Ashley's face falls and she wipes her eyes before continuing, "We supported Jocelyn's decision to leave NGO Education, met the pastor's family, and helped her move into their guest room. Matt and I attended a few of their worship services. She was leading the songs and seemed very happy. I tried to stay in touch but the pastor doesn't have a house phone, so I often missed her when stopping by." Her voice cracks as she continues, "Then last week, I stopped by and the pastor answered the door himself. He's gained so much weight, I barely recognized him. He said Jocelyn was preparing for Sunday services and couldn't be interrupted. When I promised not to stay long he suddenly became angry and shouted at me. "I don't want to see you here again and neither does Jocelyn. You need to let her move on." Then he slammed the door in my face!"

Kevin sits upright and he takes a long swallow from his glass. Ashley continues, "I was starting the truck when Jocelyn stepped onto the back porch and waved to me. One side of her face was bruised and covered in bandages. I heard someone shout at her to come back inside. Then Jocelyn gave me the help hand signal before disappearing again." Ashley's sobbing now, her face in her hands, tears flowing onto the dirty barroom table. Kevin walks around the table, gives her a hug, and adds his own tears.

Finally he exhales and asks, “When do they have services at that church?” Ashley replies absently, “Every Wednesday night and Sunday. Why do you ask?” Kevin pauses before saying softly, “I have an idea but I don’t want to talk about it here.” After they settle their bill, they get in the Land Cruiser and Kevin explains his idea while Ashley drives him back to his apartment. After debating the plan and imagining all Matt’s objections Ashley finally says, “It’s pretty flimsy, but less risky for Jocelyn than doing nothing. If our friends agree, have them contact me with the details.”

Organize

Mother Mary’s

The thrice-damned roosters announce the morning as Kevin arrives at Mother Mary’s. The guardian looks carefully in Kevin’s SUV before waving him through the gate. Kevin grins at him and says, “No contraband this time. But thanks for double-checking!” The guard knows enough English to crack a smile and wink back at Kevin, “Oui moche!” Fortunately, Fr. Vitor is finishing up his morning coffee when Kevin arrives. Kevin explains what Ashley shared about Jocelyn’s dangerous predicament.

Fr. Vitor nods his head thoughtfully, “Her situation is grave... Henri is also running out of options. He’s caught in the hills outside Ti Legliz. At this point, we need to get both of them onto an escape boat. But they must not know or recognize each other. If the Macoutes realize they’re a pair, they’ll use one to betray the other and we’ll lose both. No one can hold up to that torture for long. Best to compartmentalize everything. Jocelyn could stage here at Mother Mary’s. She’s never been here so that’s a clean cut out. Do you have a similar safe spot where Henri could hide for a few days? Then we can get them up to Port-de-Paix. There’s a refugee boat leaving there every day.”

Kevin thinks for a minute and says, “I think I see it. Henri can hole up with Jè in Carrefour and they can travel separately from Jocelyn. Two vehicles, less chance of losing them both. Can you arrange for Jocelyn’s transport?” Father Vitor grins, “That’s more complicated but worth it.

Sister Maureen can take Jocelyn up to Port-de-Paix in a van full of nuns.” Kevin bursts into laughter and Fr. Vitor quickly joins him. After wiping some tears away and reassembling his serious face Father Vitor continues, “That leaves Henri with Jè until they make the run north. Will Jè agree?” Kevin begins to smile, “He’s been my house mate for almost a year. Nothing I ask will surprise him much!”. Fr. Victor asks, “He lived with you all that time and still talks to you?” They both burst into laughter as Kevin replies, “Well, obviously, I have to pay him to be my friend!”

Father Vitor stops laughing and becomes very serious, “There’s still a problem. It’ll be difficult to get past that Gonaive checkpoint. Those guys have been making a lot of money stealing from people trying to flee north.” Kevin’s face falls, “I forgot about them. I can’t believe they’re still in control of that whole city. If we can’t get across that bridge, we are just about out of options.” The mood has shifted so they each dig out a cigarette, light up, and watch the smoke chase the mosquitos away. Fr. Vitor finally replies, “I’ve been saving a few blessings for a special occasion. I have an idea that should solve Gonaive. Get Jè on standby with his radio on the usual frequencies with the usual verses. No need to update me unless something goes wrong. We’ll transmit the departure date after I get the details from Sister Maureen. If Jè needs to back out, transmit using the same. The sisters will take Jocelyn and Espwa to Port-de-Paix on that date. If God wills it, Henri and Jocelyn will be on the same boat.”

Kevin asks, “What about that kid who was living with Jocelyn and Ashley out in Mirogoane? Not sure anyone knows his real name, but he’s called Ti Mon.” He tells Fr. Vitor about the weekend in Mirogoane, “I was so focused on Jocelyn that I forgot to ask Ashley about him. Father Vitor nods slowly and closes his eyes for long enough that Kevin wonders if he’s dozed off. Then Fr. Vitor’s eyes pop open and he smiles broadly, letting the suspense hang in the air. Kevin finally breaks the silence with exasperation, “OK, Padre. What miracles will you perform get Henri, Jocelyn, and Ti Mon to safety?” Fr. Vitor snorts briefly and says, “Oh, nothing that miraculous. The Ti Legliz community will adopt Ti Mon as one of their own. He sounds like exactly the sort of survivor who will thrive out there.” Kevin’s shoulders relax and he nods but continues to look at Fr. Vitor with a raised eyebrow, “And the mob of Macoutes guarding Gonaives Bridge?” Father Vitor takes a long drag from his cigarette, releases a smoke ring, and replies casually, “I just happen to know there will be a massive protest in Gonaives on any day I choose! I think Christmas Eve will be nice this year. You get your side ready and we’ll get Henri

and Jocelyn up north.” Kevin’s laughs, “This is why I always need a mission from God!” Fr. Vitor replies, “You’ve already got the sunglasses and half-pack of cigarettes, what else do you need?!”

“We’ve compartmentalized everything. If we do it right, you’ll never know the final outcome. Are you OK with that? It’s a lot to carry.” The way Father Vitor’s tone has changed, Kevin is listening very carefully. After a moment, he nods to himself and replies, “There’s no one left from the international community and I’m burned with all the wrong people. If we can get Henri, Jocelyn, and Ti Mon into your network’s hands, I can live without knowing the outcome.” Father Vitor looks at Kevin skeptically, “You could walk away from it and never look back?” Kevin gives a time-out signal, “Oh, God no. I’ll never forget any of it! But if we can give them a chance, that’s a lot easier to live with.”

Kevin looks lost in thought and Father Vitor waits for him to continue, “I wasn’t going to mention this today, but my NGO told me that my last chance airline ticket will be at the Pan Am counter on New Years Day.” Father Vitor nods his head, “That’s the signal. You’ve become a liability for them. They can’t suppress what you’re doing as long as you keep those memos flowing to your home network. But they can cut your financial cord.” Kevin nods along, “Just the way you predicted. They’re throwing an Associate Director title at me as if I’m a careerist now.”

Father Vitor chuckles, “That sounds like a terrible fit.” Kevin laughs and shakes his head, “I’m beginning to wonder if they read anything I sent before publishing it! But if I don’t get on that flight I’m on my own. As much as I’d love to burrow in at Ti Legliz, I’m afraid I’d lead the Macoutes to those guys too...” Kevin’s voice fades and he looks utterly lost and alone. Father Vitor looks into Kevin’s eyes, stands, and steps toward him. Kevin starts to stand, thinking it’s the signal for him to leave. But instead, Father Vitor takes him by both shoulders and asks, “I know you’re not Catholic, but is it OK if I send you off with a blessing?” Kevin looks back at him and says, “Not if it’s OK I was blessed by a houngan last weekend. Any conflict there?” With another small smile, Father Vitor replies, “Never was.”

He murmurs a prayer and quietly says, “I know you don’t think you helped, but you showed up and learned. Sometimes the only way to help is to get out of the way.” Father Vitor steps into the kitchen while Kevin pulls himself together, using his t-shirt to wipe the tears from his cheeks

and wipe his glasses clean. Fr. Vitor returns to the living room where Kevin is on his feet, backpack closed, and boots laced. Fr. Vitor says, “One last thing. After Jè drops Henri off in Port-de-Paix, have him stop by the cathedral and make a \$100 gourde donation to the first nun he sees.” Kevin looks confused, “OK, but why is he doing that?” Father Vitor grins broadly, “Even if you don’t get to know what happens, I want to!” They exchange a long embrace, look into each other’s eyes, and then nod. Kevin says goodbye to the sisters in the kitchen and shakes hand with the house’s guard, saying “M’ ale andeyo”. The guard just smiles at him warmly, pats him on the shoulder and says, “I know.”

Downtown Port-au-Prince

Kevin leaves the Lada at Mother Mary’s and walks down the familiar road, past the National Cathedral and Presidential Palace to the Iron Market. Unlike previous walks along this route, there are very few merchants since the embargo has destroyed the local economy. But there are still a few half-empty tap-taps at the market and by offering ten times the usual fare, a driver agrees to make the run to Carrefour with half the usual passengers. Kevin sits at the rear of the tap-tap, able to stand on the bumper or hang from one of the handrails, ready to jump and roll if necessary.

He sees what’s left of Port-au-Prince on the way to Carrefour. As bad as his first day was, this is much worse and he’s seen a lot since then. The trash hasn’t been collected in weeks and has piled up along the main highway like sand dunes. Commerce still continues as street kids and merchant women dig through the mounds of trash to find salvageable metal. Kevin sees a group of kids fighting over something in the pile. Without really wanting to know, Kevin glances down as the tap-tap passes. He shudders slightly and squeezes his eyes shut but that never works. The object in question is the wallet from a dead man’s pocket. He’s been shot so many times, it’s obvious a death squad left him there as a warning. But Haitians will survive, and that dead man doesn’t need his wallet anymore.

Kevin drifts into his gray zone, eyes tracking but not seeing, until the tap-tap hits the first speed bump in Carrefour. Kevin watches closely as they roll past his house. He sees that Jè has parked the Geo inside their little car port, behind all the iron bars protecting the house. Kevin doesn’t signal the driver to stop. He rides along a few minutes more, watching faces in the tap-

tap. Finally he slaps the top of the cab and gets out. He waits for the tap-tap to turn the next corner, then walks back toward his house.

Jè is outside checking tire pressure and oil on the Geo when Kevin arrives. “Oh, OH!”, Jè says in that wonderful Haitian expression of joy and surprise. Kevin laughs and says, “Baron Samdi himself could not stop me now!” They hug and Kevin says to Jè. I have an interesting mission for you, if you’re not too busy pleasing Tim.” Jè snorts, “That guy is afraid to come down here anymore. The staff and engineers have pretty much just gone around him to the Board. Jè looks over his shoulder and adds softly, “He says he’s staying for another year, but I’ve heard his wife is already back in the States looking for schools. It’s not safe here for any of you blan. No offense, but I’ll feel better when you’re not walking around here like a big white target!” Kevin smiles sadly, “When you’re right you’re right. Not to mention the target it puts on you!” Before Jè can reply Kevin continues, “But come inside and let me tell you about the plan our friends cooked up.”

Extract

Montana Hotel

Ashley and Matt are driving their Land Cruiser toward the Montana Hotel. It’s Sunday, so Jocelyn should be at church services this morning. They’re dressed in their best “missionary garb”; Matt in white shirt with clip-on tie and Ashley in her most formal dress. She’s even managed to pull her hair back into a frumpy bun. Matt is at the wheel to maintain their cover as missionary couple. As they approach the hotel, Ashley breaks the silence, “Best case, no one notices us except Jocelyn. When I give her the “help arrived” signal, she’ll know to join us at the truck after service. But if she doesn’t notice us, then you have to play your part.” She waits for Matt to respond. He does without hesitation, “Oh, crikey! I’m brand new here and can’t find the Australian embassy. I’d also like to buy some Creole Bibles.” Ashley laughs. “That’s perfect. The only character more annoying than the Ugly American is the Clueless Australian!”

They turn into the Montana's large parking lot and back into a spot near the employee entrance. Matt rolls down the windows and leaves a pocket New Testament on the seat. Ashley rolls her eyes and Matt replies, "I don't care. I still say if someone steals my Bible, that's good karma!" In his very loud voice, Matt announces "Come on, dear! Can't be late for the service." He grabs Ashley's hand and marches toward the hotel's entrance as if he owns the place. Ashley allows him to lead her along, just a step behind.

Ten minutes later the employee door bursts open as Matt shoulders through it with Jocelyn and Ashley close behind. He jumps in the truck, starts it, and shifts into gear. Ashley helps Jocelyn into the truck and climbs in behind her. Matt doesn't try a three-point turn, but spins the steering wheel and floors the accelerator. The rear-wheel drive truck sprays gravel and exhaust all over the American pastor as he bursts through the door behind them. Matt leans out the window and calls, "Sorry! Forgot our cash. We'll be back in time for the offering!" The pastor stands speechless as the truck drives through a hedge of shrubs and into the street.

As the truck speeds away, a small head pops up from behind the truck's bench seat. It's Ti Mon. He hugs Jocelyn fiercely and then adds Ashley to the embrace. Matt looks over at him and raises his eyebrows at Ti Mon, his facial expression asking "What? No hug for me?" Ti Mon grins back at him slyly. Ashley looks closely at Jocelyn, who looks away and toward the floor. She's reaching for Jocelyn's hand when a small cry fills the truck. Everyone jumps at the sound and Matt almost drives off the road, sending a few merchants sprawling to get out of the way.

Ashley stares in disbelief as Jocelyn opens her button-down sweater. She's hiding a baby underneath in a carry sling. The child begins crying and Jocelyn hums to her softly, "Ti Cheri...". Then Jocelyn begins to weep and sags against Ashley. Matt wipes his eyes with the back of his hand and struggles to see through the dusty windshield. Ashley and Jocelyn cradle the baby girl between them on the truck's torn seat. They cry together while Ti Mon tries to get his little arms around them. Ashley pats him on the head with her free hand, "Everything's OK now." Matt's watching from the corner of his eye and says, "Every life is a blessing. Doesn't matter how it arrives." Jocelyn relaxes a bit and he asks Ashley, "Hey Sheila? Where are we going? Mother Who?"

Carrefour

Jè is able to contact Ti Legliz by radio and Henri arrives the next day, carrying only a small bag. They quickly get everything into the Geo and on their way. As they pull away Jè says to Henri, “Here’s the story. You’re an engineer from the station. I’m driving you to Cap Haitien so you can help some missionaries get their transmitter working.” Henri looks skeptical, but Jè quickly adds “Don’t worry. Just sit there and look bored and supremely powerful. That’s what everyone expects from an engineer.”

Henri grins and says, “I’ll just go on about power amplifiers and backup generators. Heard enough about those on the mountain.” Jè begins to laugh, “Like Kevin always says, they only call him Engineer because Haitians assume blan need fancy titles.” He does his best impression of Kevin’s accent, “Tout moun kapab change batteries!” Both men laugh before Jè continues, “Those guards won’t know what you’re talking about but won’t admit it.” He hands Henri a few sheets of official looking paperwork. Henri asks, “What’s this supposed to be?” Jè grins, “It’s all counterfeit of course, but I’ve been through Gonaive a few times. Those Macoute cops can’t count past ten with their boots on. All you need is something with an official looking seal on it and they’ll wave you right through.”

Then Jè looks at Henri. “Solange said we’re on our way to the harbor in Port-de-Paix? Anything else I need to know?” Henri just shakes his head. “Not entirely sure myself. I’m just getting on the first boat that will have me. Hope I get past the American Coast Guard, or they’ll dump me in Guantanamo or back here to Fort Dimanche prison.” Jè shakes his head. “It’s a shame we don’t have oil here in Haiti, instead of just freed slaves and sugar cane. It’s possible the world would care about us.” Henri thinks about this and finally says, “I don’t think that would help at all. Look at the rest of Latin America. Probably just make everything worse! We’d be dealing with the US corporations, the CIA, drug cartels, and Macoute death squads along with a fully armed military. Thank all the lwa, the generals don’t have helicopters or jets!”

They get through the downtown Port-au-Prince checkpoints without any trouble. It’s early afternoon and the guards are already enjoying a drunken Christmas Eve. Jè only needs to wave his pile of paperwork and they’re waved through without comment. Just two guys in a truck. Nothing to see here. They ride along in silence for a while. Then Henri says, “Solange mentioned

the side roads in Gonaive. In case there's a demonstration. Any idea what that's about?" Jè laughs. "No, moche. Just the code phrases Kevin gave me. Could be nothing, could be something. I gave up trying to understand when he's predicting or when he actually knows something. My guess is we have some friends as guardian angels. I don't think Kevin would send us up here based on faith alone." Henri snorts, "No. Not Kevin." Jè grins, "I wonder if he'll actually leave Haiti. It's possible he'll be waiting for me when I get back."

They're still chuckling when Jè turns onto Highway 1, headed north to Gonaives. When they pass the now burned-out refugee camp that used to be called Bon Chance, they become quiet. Jè breaks the silence, "At least we got those refugees out of there in time." Then he glances quickly over at Henri with a worried expression. Henri just nods and quietly says, "And now it's my turn". The men stare quietly into the windshield as they continue their journey north.

Mother Mary's

Ashley and Matt arrive with Ti Mon, Jocelyn and her baby, just in time for dinner. The nuns quickly swarm around them. They guide everyone but Matt into a nearby women's dorm and close the door. Matt's not sure what to do with himself until an older priest approaches him. Not clear on the protocol for meeting a priest outside of confession, Matt does what he does best. He grins and says, "Hola, padre! Sak pase?" Father Vitor bursts into laughter, "Well, that wasn't the password but you must be Kevin's friend." Matt begins laughing, "Well that depends. Who wants to know?" Father Vitor takes Matt by the elbow and says, "I think we might be able to help each other. Do you know much about the Ti Legliz base community in the south?"

The sisters help everyone get cleaned up and show them their sleeping areas and the bathrooms. Ti Mon has fallen fast asleep in a chair and is snoring softly. One of the nuns tucks him into a cot next to Jocelyn's bed. Then an older nun asks Ashley if she can speak with Jocelyn alone. Ashley looks at Jocelyn questioningly, until she nods her head. Ashley gives hugs to everyone and goes downstairs. Father Vitor is finishing a long story that involves a lot of hand waving and laughing. When Fr. Vitor's laugh turn into a yawn, Matt stands up and says, "This Aussie needs his bed!" This interrupts a game of dominos and everyone says their goodbyes before Ashley and Matt return to their guest house.

Upstairs, Jocelyn is sitting on her bed, crying and rocking her baby while Ti Mon snores on his cot. The older nun sits on a bed across from Jocelyn's, reaches out and holds both her hands until she stops crying and looks up at her. "My name is Sister Maureen. I wasn't always a nun. I was once a mother." Now they're both crying. Sister continues, "But it wasn't my choice. Much as I sense this wasn't yours either." Jocelyn seems afraid to breathe but shakes her head, "No. He never even asked me." Sister Maureen nods gently and pats Jocelyn's hand. "Me either. But you must know. This isn't your fault!" Jocelyn begins crying even harder, "But I didn't even fight him. I couldn't believe it was happening!" Sister Maureen just shakes her head, moves onto the bed next to Jocelyn, and puts her arms around the young mother, who sinks into her and weeps quietly.

Jocelyn's sobs slowly subside. She takes a deep breath and wipes her eyes. Sister Maureen says kindly, "You'll be OK. We'll help you but it's not safe for you here in Port-au-Prince." Jocelyn points to her bruised and cut face and nods. Sister Maureen asks, "Do you have anywhere else to stay?". Jocelyn shakes her head bleakly. Sister Maureen then asks, "If you were able to flee the country, would you?" Almost without hesitation, Jocelyn nods her head vigorously. Sister Maureen considers this and asks, "How much would you risk? Would you risk everything, even the life of your child?"

Suddenly, Sister Maureen stops abruptly, a look of surprise on her face, "I'm so sorry! What is your daughter's name?" Jocelyn smiles just a bit and replies, "Espwa". Sister Maureen's face breaks into a contented smile, "Oh! That's our answer. Hope. With Faith and Love... Tomorrow morning, a few sisters and I will take you to Port-de-Paix. Ashley and Matt left an envelope with US dollars to get you to Miami and beyond, if God wills it. We'll get you on a boat that's headed for Miami. Just tell anyone who asks that Espwa's father is dead, but that you're trying to reach his family. It's true but not in the way they'll think. Don't worry about the child's light complexion. The blan on those Coast Guard cutters can't tell one brown face from another."

Christmas Eve, 1991

Solange arrives at Mother Mary's very early with a large bag and is greeted warmly by the guard. She's not wearing her NY Yankees cap and is dressed like a market woman. A passenger van is parked in front of the house with its rear doors open. Solange puts her bag in the its cargo

area, then joins Sister Maureen, Jocelyn, and Espwa in the kitchen. Sr. Maureen looks up and smiles when Solange enters, “Oh, good! Perfect timing. Jocelyn, I’d like you to meet Solange. She’s a friend from a church in the south and will be traveling with us this morning.”

Jocelyn says good morning to Solange, who smiles back at her kindly and returns the greeting. Sister Maureen is putting bottles of water into woven bags as Father Vitor comes into the room with Ti Mon. Solange sees Ti Mon, gets down on one knee and asks “Who’s this gro neg?” Ti Mon looks up at her shyly and Solange cracks just a hint of a smile. “I see you’ve already met Father Vitor.” She looks at Ti Mon with a serious face before winking, “Please don’t give him any more white hair!” Ti Mon giggles and then Father Vitor says with a overly hurt expression, “Oh, oh! I’m right here...” Solange smiles at Ti Mon again and sits back down at the table, where Jocelyn is nursing baby Espwa. Solange gently pats Espwa on her little head before looking into Jocelyn’s eyes, “I won’t be joining you on the boat, but I’ll make sure you get on one safely.”

The morning roosters begin to announce sunrise, which adds a sense of urgency. A few more nuns come into the kitchen to help Jocelyn get Espwa nestled in her carry sling. Then they take Solange into a nearby room. In a few moments, she emerges wearing a blue nun’s habit. Ti Mon looks at Solange in surprise, his mouth hanging open. Father Vitor sees his expression and bursts into laughter. “No, Ti Mon, it’s not quite that easy. She’s not really a nun but since it’s Christmas Eve, Sister Maureen said it’s OK to pretend.”

Solange gets into the van’s shotgun seat and Sister Maureen climbs in the driver side. They wait for Jocelyn to finish saying her goodbyes to Ti Mon. He’s almost frantic now, sensing that Jocelyn and Espwa are leaving him behind. Jocelyn hugs him tightly and Father Vitor joins her as they hug and rock the small boy in a group hug of four with Espwa nestled between them. Time seems to stop as Ti Mon cries softly, his body shaking as he swallows a last few sobs. Looking up at Jocelyn, he asks in English, “You’ll return?” Jocelyn looks into his eyes and finally says, “Little brother, I will see you again when Bon Dieu allows it. But you won’t need me now. You’ll stay here and spend Christmas with Father Vitor and the brothers and sisters. Then when Solange gets back from our trip, she’ll take you to meet some new friends in the countryside.” Father Vitor quickly adds, “There’s a boy named Jedi who could really use a big brother!” Ti Mon has calmed himself and watches the nuns help Jocelyn into the van with

Espwa. He still seems unconvinced until Father Vitor asks, “Have you ever seen a donkey climb a mountain with a little man on its back?”

As the engine starts, Sr. Maureen looks back at Jocelyn and Espwa in the rear seat. “If anyone stops us, just pretend to be very ill. We’re taking you and your baby to a mission hospital in Cap Haitian.” Jocelyn smiles wanly, “It will be no problem to feign illness. Should I also practice some Hail Mary’s or something?” Solange snorts with laughter, “No, please don’t. Because I don’t know any of that either. This rosary is pure trade craft!” Sister Maureen starts to back the van out of the courtyard and chuckles, “By the time we get to Gonaives, the soldiers and their gangs will be very drunk. I’m counting on that and their unwillingness to commit atrocities on Christmas Eve. Especially with a van full of nuns and a child in their care.” Solange laughs again and says to Jocelyn, “We would have given you and Espwa nun habits too, but even those illiterate Macoutes would see through that.” The women all laugh as Sister Maureen gets the van moving. As they pass the cathedral, Baby Espwa burps and they all laugh even harder.

PART NINE: SURVIVE / DIE?

Exit

Port-de-Paix

Christmas Eve, 1991

Late that night, Jè arrives at the Port-de-Paix cathedral and is surprised to find its doors unlocked. He can hear piano music but doesn't hear voices. He pushes a door open and steps inside. Jè has never been in a Catholic cathedral before, just the chapel in Ti Legliz. But he's been told to make a donation. Out of pure respect for Kevin, he's doing this instead of keeping the 100 Gourde note and getting some sleep in his SUV. The trip had taken much longer than expected. If not for the conveniently timed mass demonstration, they would not have made it through Gonaives. Even the side streets were under gang control. What's left of the Government of Haiti can barely keep the main highways clear of bandits and kidnappers.

But they made it to the port and Jè hung around long enough to see Henri get onto a boat. Jè walks into the cathedral and tries to decide what to do about the holy water. Is that necessary? But before he needs to decide, a Haitian nun materializes from the gloom and says, "My name is Sister Maureen. Have you come to pray, confess, or make an offering?" A second nun steps from behind Sister Maureen, and Jè sees that it's Solange. With a finger in front of her mouth, she glances around and signals that he should make no reaction. His face breaks into a brief smile before he softly replies, "I'd like to make an offering on behalf of my friends."

Caribbean Sea

Christmas Day, 1991

Henri sinks deeper into the warm Caribbean Sea, the screams and cries of the passengers fading as his ears fill with water. The waterlogged plywood sheet that's been supporting him is now sinking. He's just, floating... Henri knows this is the end and it's OK. Not so bad. Peaceful, except for the burning in his lungs as he holds his last breath as long as he can. Finally, he lets it

go, a few last bubbles beginning to slip from his nose as he squeezes his eyes shut against the burning sea water.

But then he feels something brush against his forehead. Not a wave or debris, something soft. He reaches up to brush this distraction away, but his fingers touch something warm. Instead of releasing the last bit of buoyancy in his lungs, he kicks his feet in a frog kick he learned long ago and breaks the surface. Almost reluctantly, he takes a deep breath and wipes water from his eyes with one hand while paddling with the other.

Another lightning flash and a half-second later, the crash of thunder. Henri realizes that what he touched was the infant Espwa, floating alone on one of the styrofoam life rings that were loosely attached to the fishing boat's stern. She's sobbing quietly with brief cries that seem like too much effort. Her one hand is caught in the rope webbing of the life buoy and her other is jammed into her mouth. Her lips are cracked and parched, but they still keep suckling on her little thumb.

Henri paddle-crawls over to the life ring and grabs hold of it, just as a wave threatens to capsize the little life boat with its tiny passenger. As his fingers sink into the ring it begins to crumble, it's ancient fibers disintegrating and disappearing into the sea like sand. As the life buoy melts away, little Espwa begins sinking into the water with it. Her one hand struggling to free itself from the restraint of the webbing while her other stays in her mouth, lips pressed tightly around her thumb's first knuckle.

Henri cannot take anymore. His eyes streaming with tears and salt water, he lifts his head to the sky and screams, "Bon Dieu!!!!" Espwa sinks farther into the dark water. Another lighting strike on the horizon illuminates the scene. Henri sees another hand emerge from the water behind Espwa's sinking life buoy. Another swell of waves and Henri is sure this hand will be the Lwa Agwé herself, ending their misery once and for all. But as the swell subsides, Henri sees that it is the infant's mother, Jocelyn.

Jocelyn has managed to tie her two empty water jugs around her waist, creating a sort of life preserver. She's kicking her feet weakly, trying to make her way to Espwa. On reflex, Henri also begins kicking his feet but now one of them is entangled in something heavy. He keeps paddling with right hand, left foot, and uses his left hand to try to pull his right foot and leg free from whatever has entangled them. Finally, Henri gets his fingers inside the tangle ensnaring his

ankle. He heaves the tangled mess to the surface and finds his original sealed water jugs attached to the rope.

Henri's eyes reach Jocelyn's as a swell lifts them high above baby Espwa, her sinking buoy in the valley below them. Without needing any exchange of words, Jocelyn pushes one of her empty water bottles toward Henri, still attached by rope to her other empty water bottle. Realizing what she's proposing, Henri does the same with one of his full water jugs. It has just enough buoyancy to keep it from sinking. When the swells drop and they're on either side of Espwa, they loop their ropes under the buoy and improvise a raft for her.

Jocelyn is really struggling now. She's trying to hold onto one of Espwa's hands while treading water. She'd been relying on both empty water jugs to keep herself afloat. Now she doesn't have the strength to kick and paddle while also trying to hold onto her baby and a full water jug. Not enough strength. Not enough hands.

Henri sees this happening but is having trouble of his own. Somewhere along the line, a nail cut through his right tricep and that arm doesn't work anymore. He's got the water jug rope wrapped around his lame arm so tightly he can't feel it. Another cross-current wobbles them, tangling Henri, Jocelyn, and Espwa together in a mass. While within arms reach, Jocelyn and Henri pass their jugs back and forth again until each has two partially filled water jugs. As if God is still interested, the next wave is gentle and allows all three to rest together on top of a new life raft made of refuse and water jugs.

Jocelyn takes a long pull of water from one of her jugs while Henri gently cradles Espwa against his chest. Then Jocelyn hands the water jug to Henri, and takes Espwa back in exchange. Jocelyn's face gleams in the reflected moon light, her scarred cheek accentuating her burning eyes. After Espwa is nestled safely in her lap, they relax for a moment. Espwa is content for now. Henri leans against Jocelyn and enjoys the feeling of her warm back against his own bleeding and scarred skin.

Then either God or Agwé herself decides to get involved and a suitcase floats by. Henri snags its handle with his foot and pulls it toward their little raft. Fortunately, it isn't locked and opens easily with his first try and he pushes it behind him to Jocelyn. Henri hears her squeal in happy surprise. He looks over his shoulder to see Jocelyn pulling a pink onesie over Espwa's tiny head.

The effort to do all this is overwhelming. As the suitcase fills with seawater, Henri sees a flashlight inside. He hooks its elastic loop with his foot and pulls it toward him. Moving methodically now, he carefully grips the light in his left hand, pushes the switch, and is stunned to see it burst into clean, white light. Henri snaps out of his momentary trance when he hears the sound of a small, outboard boat engine. The putt, putt, putt, of its motor is audible over the wind, but it seems to be passing by them instead of coming closer.

Jocelyn tries to cry out toward the sound, but her voice is too cracked from hours of shouting, crying, and praying. She can barely utter a croaking squeak. Henri's in terrible shape himself and can barely even raise his head, much less summon the energy to call for help. Instead, he just holds his left arm up as high as he can and waves the flashlight in every direction. After a long minute, he hears the putt, putt sound getting closer.

Jocelyn and Espwa are slipping away now. The ropes that held them together for a few minutes, now untangling themselves. Henri tries to keep his arm high with the flashlight, while frog crawling his way toward them. He's falling behind though, his muscle mass causing him to sink. He has no body fat and can only keep afloat by kicking his legs. But they're so tired now. Henri is starting to feel that "going to die now" calm seeping in again. He's still paddling with his left hand out of habit, the flashlight gone and forgotten. He's feeling peaceful though. No longer really that concerned about what's happening because it's happening somewhere else. Soon he'll be free.

Then a boat appears. Henri thanks all the gods that it's not a US Coast Guard cutter, but a fishing boat even smaller than the one they stepped onto in Haiti. It doesn't have a US or Haitian flag but his eyes are streaming with sea water and it stops mattering as another wave washes over his head. As the boat draws closer, two men are leaning over its bow with long poles, orange life preservers at the end of each. Another man kicks off his shoes and dives into the water, swimming quickly toward Jocelyn and Espwa.

The boat draws closer and Henri can see the boat's captain. He's very dark-skinned, compared to the men that are pulling them into the boat. After they're safely onboard, the captain gives sharp orders to the crew and they quickly wrap wool blankets around the three Haitian refugees. Then some hot, sweet, black coffee from a thermos. Then a banana and some crackers. Then, one

of the men who helped pull them from the water, exchanges places with the captain at the boat's wheel.

The captain sits down on the deck beside them and Henri sees that he has Haitian features. Henri glances at the captain with a look of surprise. The man nods at him before leaning down to pat Espwa on her swaddled back. Then he squats down and looks calmly and kindly into Jocelyn's eyes, "Gracias, pequeña madre" Then into Henri's, staying there long enough for both men to share mutual respect. Then the captain says in Haitian Kreyòl, "Welcome to Cuba. NOT Guantanamo. You're safe now."

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For my Haitian, African, American, Australian, Belgian, Canadian, Columbian, Cuban, Dominican, Dutch, German, and Jamaican brothers and sisters who hoped for justice and dreamed of peace.

There are no more easy choices. I hope we can do better.

GLOSSARY OF HAITIAN PHRASES

Throughout *Blan Fou*, the Haitian language is written without direct in-line translation. Kreyòl Ayisyen (Haitian Creole) is as beautiful and complicated as Haiti and its history. It survived as an oral language and was written sparingly, using vaguely French phonetics (in my notes, in any case). The events of the novel occurred when Haitian Creole was first being adopted as an official language, in addition to French.

In 1991, non-Haitians (blan) referred to the language as "Haitian Creole" while Haitians claimed it as "Kreyòl Ayisyen". So without further negotiation, both sides settled into "Creole" and "Kreyòl" since they sound the same audibly and no one wrote much down anyway.

In Chapter: Escape...

“Mal leve”

English: Not a direct translation. Similar to “Someone not raise properly”

Usage: General use term for anyone who is causing trouble for someone else. Often followed by “bastard” or other slur.

In Chapter: Arrival...

"Koupe tet. Boule kay."

English: “Cut off their heads. Burn their houses.”

Historical context: Attributed to Jean-Jacques Dessalines, leader of Haiti’s revolution against French slave owners.

It is thought to be both a rallying cry for his troops, but also a strategy to prevent the French from recolonizing Haiti after it became the world’s first republic of former African slaves. It is important to note that the statement was directed specifically at French interests. Polish

legionnaires (who defected from the French) and Germans (who did not participate in the slave trade) were spared and offered full Haitian citizenship.

In Chapter: Missionaries...

"Voodoo"

English: The term "voodoo" is often a term used disparagingly by Westerners to describe Haiti's folk religious traditions. Haitian practitioners use the term "Vodou" or "Vodoun."

Usage: An aspect of Vodoun that has been portrayed in Western literature, are the gods or "lwa" or "loa". Lwa are spiritual figures rooted in West African religious traditions, often blended with names of Catholic saints. In this novel, Baron Samdi (Lwa of the Dead) and Agwé (Lwa of the Sea) are mentioned.

"Kompran?"

English: "Understood?"

"Tout sanble."

English: "Everything looks the same."

Usage: Literal or in this case, "I hear you, but my mind remains unchanged."

"Sak pase?"

English: "What's up?" or "What's happening?"

Usage: Casual greeting. Less formal than "How are you?"

"M'a boule!"

English: Direct translation is difficult. Can be meant literally as "I'm fired up!"

Usage: Often used with facial expression to indicate sarcasm, "I'm barely making it" or "maintaining".

In Chapter: Networks...

"Komo o ye? Non mwen se..."

English: "How are you doing? My name is..."

"Gro neg"

English: "Big man"

Usage: Not a direct translation. General term for any man, regardless of skin color (not just a "black" man)

"Tap-Tap" or "Camion"

English: "Taxi" or "Truck" (Public transit)

Usage: Used interchangeably to describe the public transport vehicles painted with vivid decorations:

"Tap-tap" usually refers to the small Toyota pickup vehicles

"Camion" is often used to describe the larger school bus or truck sized vehicles

"Ti kob"

English: "A little bit"

Usage: Implies a financial donation. Similar to English phrase, "Can you spare some change?".

"M pa gen anye pou ou."

English: "I don't have anything for you."

Usage: Not, "I don't have anything". Acknowledges that the request was fair and valid, but indicates no help will be provided at this time.

Alternative usage: Each word can be emphasized for different effect. For example, if "anye" is emphasized it is much more emphatic, "I don't have ANYTHING for you."

"Andeyo"

English: “Over there”

Usage: Not a direct translation. Refers to anywhere other than Haiti

“Mayin moulin”

English: “Corn meal”

Usage: Term for a meal of beans over corn meal (instead of with rice).

“Ki kote”

English: “Where is”

Usage: Followed by a noun

In Chapter: Protect and Serve...

“Cherie, pi belle peyi, pase lot peyi”

English: “Haiti my dear, my beautiful country. More beautiful than any other country”

Usage: Opening stanza to Haiti’s national song

“Tout blan sanble”

English: “All white people (foreigners) look the same”

Usage: Ironic reversal of the racist phrase used by southern American Marines during the US invasion and occupation of Haiti (1915 – 1934).

“Ti Mon”

English: “Little Man”

Usage: Common general nickname. Can be dismissive or affectionate.

“Ou vle dlo coconut?”

English: “Would you like water of coconut?”

Usage: Coconut water (not milk) which is lost in the processing of coconut for export.

In Chapter: Self-Defense...

"Ti vagabon"

English: "Little thief"

"Tet cho"

English: "Hot head"

Usage: A crazy person with very bad judgment.

"M pa pale Angle"

English: "I don't speak English"

"Titid"

English: "Little one"

Usage: Fond nickname for President Aristide, because he's so diminutive in size.

"Bouki net"

English: "Maximum Bouki"

Usage: Reference to a Haitian proverb where "Bouki" constantly gets himself in trouble due to stupidity and gullibility

"Pale cho"

English: "Hot talk"

Usage: Dangerous or particularly heated speech.

"M' ale"

English: "I'm going"

Usage: Anywhere else, not specific. Can be followed by place, as in "M ale Zeta Zuni".

In Chapter: Safety First...

"Bagay"

English: "Thing"

Usage: Singular or plural. Can refer to a single item or a whole collection of "stuff"

In Chapter: Resilience...

"Ti legliz"

English: "Little church"

Usage: Little is used to emphasize that this church is not necessarily a part of the "big" Catholic church hierarchy.

"Ti groupma"

English: "Little group"

Usage: "Little" emphasizes the relationship of the small group to the small church, without the hierarchy.

In Chapter: Choices...

"Mwen regret sa. M' bezuin ale."

English: "I'm sorry. I need to go."

"M' ap tounen"

English: "I will return."
