

AFTER
RIMBAUD'S *ILLUMINATIONS*

DAVID-BAPTISTE CHIROT

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TIR AUX PIGEONS

2008

Entering the dark low barred door. A smell of sawdust long unswept, wet and rancid. The bartender a giant African. Gesturing to the courtyard he says *through there*—a small arch. In the courtyard rain is falling. Wooden doors indicate toilets. Two have no door. Opening one door, a man with pants around his ankles shrieks—hopping, he chases me with a knife.

Jean–Pierre is cooking horsemeat in blood and wine and garlic. It makes the cramped L–shaped apartment all the hotter. Marcel is showing me how to make *plastiques*. His hard hands work slowly so I learn. For once we are not smoking, no cigarettes hanging from our lips. We're not suicidal after all. Certainly not on such a night. Marcel says three girls are coming. We will fuck them in the ass. He says they are very tight this way. But *no children you see* he says *no complications*. The three stacked TVs are talking incessantly about the moon landing. Some famous person saying that because of Jules Verne's books and Melies' early film classic, the French have been there first. *You see what assholes they are?* Marcel says *They think they own history. With these little bombs we will make a hole in history and then—and then—the people will rush in.* The little bombs are almost done and Jean–Pierre is calling us to eat meat and blood and garlic. We will light candles, but not to say Grace.

The three virgins are coming for us. Perhaps one can enter Heaven backwards. It is very hot in here.

The girls in this town have large supple thighs. Below the knees, legs bared, they swing their feet in time to the band. Sitting on the stone embankments along the ancient street they slightly part their legs in skirts—the heat of summer rushes out into the evening.

I am the one walking incessantly these streets and alleys. All wall cracks and pot holes are known to me. I am the one listening to the peripheral languages signaling from the hubcaps, the shining metals, the bright plastics, the painted woods. The construction site engulfs me with its orchestrations of colors, sounds, shards—its chaos and order exchanging forms. The melted snow runs in rivulets among smashed stones. Puddles pool slick with oil. I am slowly finding fragments of myself here. After all, it is called a construction site.

Very dusty evening at the train station. Hot wind and lurid smoke make the air feel on fire. Waiting, a long line of North bound Arab workers in cheap suits with small bundles. Waiting, barefoot Spaniards, necks birdlike to peer into the incendiary distance. The station master wears a long dirty mustache. Women in brightly colored robes, their heads covered, hold noisy small children. Young couples are locked in embraces. One man has his hands up a girl's dress—her hands down his pants. A woman jerks a gaping child away. A few men laugh and drink wine from wicker encased bottles they pass in a circle. The light to the East is gold. Every person is a Saint in an icon in this moment in time. From the fiery West a train approaches. Soon all Hell will break loose.

This is a very strange place. I am sitting on the edge of a bed. I am looking out the barred window at a small yard flanked by extensions of this building (I *seem* to be in). A laundry line hangs limp. A picnic table with a crow perched on it. The only sound I hear is someone yelling over and over *motherfuckin motherfuckah*. The light has a yellow tinge to it. It slants and makes a line separating light from shadow on a building opposite. There is an alley, narrow and partly made of bricks. A cat is moving slowly along it. The rest of the area is brown—yellow short grass in muddy earth. A man suddenly looking at me. His face is quiet and his eyes are encyclopedias.

—*You got time to get used to it bro.*

—*The best part is when the cat chases the crow.*

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