

## THE MISSION MEMORY OF A REVOLUTION

(The play employs motifs drawn from Anna Segher's story, "The Light on the Gallows")

**by Heiner Mueller, 1979**

*Translation: Dennis Redmond © 2001*

Galloudec to Antoine. I'm writing this letter on my death-bed. I write in my own name and in the name of Citizen Sasportas, who was hanged in Port Royal. I'm to inform you that we must return the mission, which the Assembly entrusted to us through your person, since we could not fulfill it. Perhaps others will achieve more. You will hear nothing more of Debuissou, he's doing fine. It's generally the case that traitors do well when peoples bathe in blood. This is how the world works and it is not a good thing. Please excuse my handwriting, they've taken away a leg and I'm writing in a fever. I hope that this letter finds you in good health and remain, with Republican greetings.

*Sailor. Antoine. Woman.*

SAILOR Are you Citizen Antoine. There's a letter here for you. From a Galloudec. It's not my fault if the letter's old and maybe the affair's already settled. The Spanish got hold of us off Cuba, then the English in Trinidad, until your Consul Bonaparte made peace with England. Then they robbed me in London on the street, because I was drunk, but they didn't find the letter. As for this Galloudec: he won't get any older. He croaked in a hospital in Cuba, half prison and half hospital. He lay there with gangrene, I with a fever. TAKE THE LETTER IT MUST ARRIVE EVEN IF IT'S THE LAST THING YOU DO YOU MUST DO THIS FOR ME was the last thing he said to me. And the address of an office and your name, if you are this Antoine. But there's no office there anymore, and no one there, where the office was, knows anything about your name, Antoine, if that is your name. One of 'em who lives behind the scaffolding in a basement sent me to a school where Antoine supposedly worked as a teacher. But they didn't know anything about him, either. Then a maid told me, your nephew saw you here. He's a porter. And he described you to me, if you're him.

ANTOINE I don't know any Galloudec.

SAILOR I don't know what in the letter was so important to him. Something to do with a mission. Which he had to return, so that others could carry on with his work. Whatever work that might have been. At the end he didn't talk of anything else. Except when he was screaming, and that was from the pain of the wound. It came in waves. And lasted a long time, until he was done with the dying. The doctor said, his heart is too strong, he should've died ten times before. Sometimes human beings can stand too little, sometimes too much. Life's a bitch. The other one, who he described in the letter, a Negro, had a quicker death. He read the letter aloud to me, Galloudec, so that I learned it by heart, in case it was lost. And if you still don't know him, I can tell you what they did to him and how he died, you weren't there. First they cut off the leg up to the knee, then the rest. It was the left one. Then

ANTOINE I don't know anything about a mission. I don't assign missions, I'm no Lord or master. I earn my living by tutoring. It's not much. And I've seen enough slaughter. I know the anatomy of human beings inside out. Galloudec.

*Woman with wine bread cheese.*

WOMAN You've got a visitor. I sold an Order. The one for the Vendée, when you killed all those peasants for the republic.

ANTOINE Yes.

SAILOR As far as I can tell, you still have everything. In contrast to this Galloudec, who you don't know and who's dead as a doornail. The other's name is Sasportas. They hung him in Port Royal, if you want to know, for the mission which you don't know anything about, in Jamaica. The gallows stand on a cliff. When they're dead, they're cut away and fall into the sea. The sharks take care of the rest. Thanks for the wine.

ANTOINE Sasportas. I'm the Antoine you're looking for. I have to be careful. France isn't a republic anymore, our Consul has become Emperor and is conquering Russia. It's easier to talk about a lost revolution with a full mouth. Blood, clotted into tin for medals. The peasants didn't know any better, did they. And maybe they were right, weren't they. Commerce is blooming. We're giving those on Haiti their soil to eat. That was the Negro Republic. Liberty [Freiheit: liberty, freedom] led the people to the barricades, and when the dead awaken she wears a uniform. I'll tell you a secret now: she's also only a whore. And I can even laugh about it. Hahaha. But there's an emptiness here that was alive. I was there, when the people stormed the Bastille. I was there, when the head of the last Bourbon fell into the basket. We reaped the heads of the aristocracy. We reaped the heads of traitors.

WOMAN Fine harvest. Are you drunk again, Antoine.

ANTOINE She doesn't like it when I talk about my time of greatness. The Gironde trembled before me. Look at her, my France. The breasts sucked dry. Between the thighs the wasteland. A dead ship in the surf of the new century. Do you see how she gobbles it up. France needs a bloodbath, and the day will come.

*Antoine throws red wine over his head.*

SAILOR I don't understand any of that. I'm a sailor, I don't believe in politics. The world's different everywhere you go. Here's the letter. *Exits.*

ANTOINE *screams:* Be careful, sailor, when you leave my house. The police of our Minister Fouché won't bother to ask if you don't believe in politics. – Galloudec, Sasportas. Where is your leg, Galloudec. Why does your tongue loll from your mouth, Sasportas. What do you want from me. What can I do about your stump. And your rope. Am I supposed to cut my own leg off. Do you want me to hang myself next to you. Ask your Emperor, Galloudec, for your leg. Show your Emperor your tongue, Sasportas. He's riding to victory in Russia, I can show you the way. What do you want from me. Go. Go away. Disappear. Tell them, woman. Tell them they should get lost, I don't want to see them anymore. Are you still here. Your letter arrived, Galloudec. That's it. Anyway it's all over for you. LONG LIVE THE REPUBLIC. *Laughs* You're thinking, I'm doing fine, yes. Are you hungry. There. *Throws food at the dead.*

WOMAN Come to bed, Antoine.

ANTOINE

THAT IS THE ASCENSION FOR A SMALL PRICE  
IN THE GRATING OF THE CHEST SO LONG AS IT LASTS  
THE HEART THE DOG

*During intercourse the Angel of Despair enters.*

ANTOINE/STIMME Who are you.

WOMAN/VOICE I am the Angel of Despair. With my hands I hand out ecstasy, numbness, forgetfulness, the pleasure and pain of bodies. My language is silence, my song the cry. In the shadow of my wings dwells terror. My hope is the last gasp. My hope is the first battle. I am the knife with which the dead pry open their coffin. I am who will be. My flight is the insurrection, my heaven the abyss of tomorrow.

We had arrived in Jamaica, three emissaries of the French assembly, our names: Debuissou, Galloudec, Sasportas, our mission: a slave rebellion against the dominion of the British throne in the name of the Republic of France. She who is the motherland of Revolution, the terror of thrones, the hope of the poor. In which all human beings are equal under the axe of justice. Which has no bread against the hunger of the slums, but hands enough, to light the flaming torch of liberty equality fraternity in all lands. We stood at a plaza by the harbor. A cage has been placed in the middle of the plaza. We heard the wind from the sea, the rough whistling of the palm-leaves, the sweeping of the palm-fronds, with which the female Negroes swept the dust from the plaza, the moaning of the slaves in the cage, the surf. We saw the breasts of the female Negroes, the body of the slaves in the cage whipped into bloody welts, the palace of the Governor. We said: this is Jamaica, shame of the Antilles, slave-ship in the Caribbean Sea.

SASPORTAS Until we're done with our work.

GALLOUDEC You can start right away. Didn't you come here to free the slaves. That in the cage is a slave. He'll have been one by tomorrow, if he isn't freed today.

DEBUISSON They put them in the cage for trying to run away or for other crimes, to deter the others, until they wither in the sun. It was just like this when I left Jamaica, ten years ago. Don't look, Sasportas, we can't help just one of them.

GALLOUDEC Only the one ever dies. The dead are counted up.

DEBUISSON Death is the mask of the revolution.

SASPORTAS When I leave this place, others will hang in the cages, with white skin, until the sun burns them black. Then many will have been helped.

GALLOUDEC Perhaps we should put up a guillotine. That's purer. The Red Widow is the best cleaning woman.

DEBUISSON The beloved of the slums.

SASPORTAS I still say a cage is a good thing, when the sun stands high enough, for a white skin.

GALLOUDEC We're not here for recriminations on our skin color, Citizen Sasportas.

SASPORTAS We're not equal, if we haven't stripped each other's skins away.

DEBUISSON That was a bad start. Let's put on our masks. I'm who I was: Debuissou, son of slave-holders on Jamaica, with the right of inheritance to a plantation of four hundred slaves. Returning home to the lap of the family, in order to claim his inheritance, out of the overcast sky of Europe, grey with the smoke and blood-mist of the new philosophy, into the pure air of the Caribbean, after the terror of the revolution has opened his eyes to the eternal truth, that everything in the past is better than everything in the present. Incidentally I'm a doctor, a helper of humanity regardless of anyone's status, master or slave. I heal the one for the other, so that everything shall remain as it is, so long as it stands, my face the rosy countenance of the slave-holder, who has nothing to fear in this world except death.

SASPORTAS And his slaves.

DEBUISSON Who are you, Galloudec.

GALLOUDEC A peasant from Brittany, who learned to hate the revolution in the rain of blood of the guillotine, I wish only that the rain had fallen more heavily, and not only in France, loyal servant of the noble master Debuissou, and believer in the holy order of the monarchy and the church. I hope, I will not have to say this prayer too often.

DEBUISSON You stepped out of character twice, Galloudec. Who are you.

GALLOUDEC A peasant from Brittany, who learned to hate the revolution in the rain of blood of the guillotine, loyal servant of the noble Lord Debuissou. I believe in the holy order of the monarchy and the church.

SASPORTAS *parodies*: I believe in the holy order of the monarchy and the church. I believe in the holy order of the monarchy and the church.

DEBUISSON Sasportas. Your mask.

GALLOUDEC It shouldn't be hard for you to play the slave, Sasportas, in your black skin.

SASPORTAS Fleeing from the successful black revolution in Haiti I attached myself to Lord Debuissou, because God created me for slavery. I am his slave. Isn't that enough.

*Galloudec applauds.*

SASPORTAS Next time I'll answer you with my knife, Citizen Galloudec.

GALLOUDEC I know that you're playing the toughest role. It's written on your body.

SASPORTAS With the same whips, which will write a new alphabet in other bodies, in our hands.

DEBUISSON Successful revolution isn't good. One doesn't say these things to lords. Black revolution is also not good. Blacks make a hue and a cry, if it comes to that, but not a revolution.

SASPORTAS Hasn't the revolution been victorious in Haiti. The black revolution.

DEBUISSON It's the scum which was victorious. The scum rules Haiti.

*Sasportas spits.*

DEBUISSON You're spitting in the wrong direction: I'm your master. Now say it.

SASPORTAS In flight from the scum, which has turned Haiti into a sewer.

GALLOUDEC Sewer is good. You learn fast, Sasportas.

DEBUISSON Take your hands from your face and look at the flesh, which is dying in this cage. You too, Galloudec. It is yours and yours and my flesh. His moaning is the Marseillaise of bodies, on which the new world will be built. Learn the melody. We will hear it for a long time to come, like it or not, it is the melody of the revolution, our work. Many will die in these cages before our work is done. Many will die in these cages, because we are doing our work. This is what we must do with our work for our kind, and perhaps only that. Our place is the cage, if we tear off our masks before it is time. The revolution is the mask of death. Death is the mask of the revolution.

*An enormous Negro enters.*

DEBUISSON This is the oldest slave of my family. He is deaf and dumb, something between a human being and a dog. He will spit into the cage. Perhaps you should do that too, Sasportas, so that you can hate your black skin for the time when we need it. Then he will kiss my shoes, he's already licking his lips, you see, and will carry me on his back, his former and future master, into the house of my father, grunting with bliss. The family opens their arms, tomorrow our work begins.

*The enormous Negro spits into the cage, looks at Sasportas, bows before Galloudec, kisses Debuissou's shoes, bears him on his back. Galloudec and Sasportas follow after.*

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*Homecoming of the long-lost son. Father and mother in open chest. On a throne,  
FirstLove. Debuissou Galloudec Sasportas undressed by slaves and costumed:*

*Debuissou as slave-holder, Galloudec as overseer with whip, Sasportas as slave.*

FIRSTLOVE Little Victor played revolution. Now he returns home to the lap of the family. Home to Papa with a skull criss-crossed with worms. Home to Mama with her smell of stale flowers. Did you hurt yourself, little Victor. Come closer and show your wounds. Don't you recognize me anymore. You don't need to be afraid, little Victor. Not of me. Not of your first love. Which you betrayed for your revolution, your blood-smeared second one. With which you wallowed in the gutter for ten years in competition with the rabble. Or in the mortuaries, where she counted up her spoils. I smell her perfume of cow-dung. Tears, little Victor. Did you love her so much. Ah Debuissou. I told you, she is a whore. The snake with the bloodthirsty crotch [Scham]. Slavery is a law of nature, as old as humanity. Why should it end before. Just look at my slaves, and yours, our property. They've been animals all their lives. Why should they be human beings, because it says so on a paper in France. Hardly readable because of so much more blood than ever was spilled for slavery here in your and my beautiful Jamaica. I'll tell you a story: on Barbados a plantation-owner was murdered two months after the abolition of slavery. They came to him, the emancipated. They walked on their knees like in church. And you do know what they wanted. Back to the security of slavery. That's humanity for you: its first homeland is the mother, a prison. *Slaves raise skirts of the mother in the cabinet over her head.* Here it gapes, the homeland, here it yawns, the lap of the family. Say a word if you want to come back and she'll stuff you inside, the idiot, the eternal mother. The poor man in Barbados wasn't so lucky. They beat him to death with clubs, his no-longer-slaves, like a rabid dog, because he didn't take them back from the frosty spring of their freedom under the beloved whip. Do you like the story, Citizen Debuissou. Freedom lives on the backs of slaves, equality beneath the axe. Do you want to be my slave, little Victor. Do you love me. Here are the lips, which you kissed. *Female slave paints her a giant mouth.* They remember, Victor Debuissou, your skin. Here are the breasts, which warmed you, little Victor. *Female slave applies make-up on her nipples etc.* They haven't forgotten your mouth and your hands. That's the skin, which drank your sweat. That's the lap, which received your sperm which burns my heart. *Female slave paints a blue heart on her.* Do you see the blue flame. Do you know, how they catch escaped slaves on Cuba. They hunt them with bloodhounds. And so will I take

back, Citizen Debuissou, what your whore, the revolution, robbed me of, my property. *Slaves as dogs, which hunt Debuissou, driven on by Galloudec with the whip and by the father's ghost with shouts of SIC 'EM.* I want to bite the tracks of my tears out of your soiled flesh with the fangs of my dogs, my sweat, my cries of pleasure. Cutting my bridal gown out of your hide with the knives of their claws. To translate your breath, which smacks of the dead bodies of kings, into the language of misery, which belongs to the slaves. I want to eat your sex and give birth to a tiger, which gobbles up time, with which the clocks of my empty heart strike, the heart through which the rain of the tropics flows. *Female slave puts a tiger-mask on her.* YESTERDAY I BEGAN / TO KILL YOU MY HEART / NOW I LOVE / YOUR CORPSE / WHEN I'M DEAD / MY DUST WILL SCREAM FOR YOU. I want to give you this bitch as a present, little Victor, so that you fill her up with your decaying sperm. And beforehand I'll have her whipped, so that your blood intermingles. Do you love me, Debuissou. One should never leave a woman alone.

*Slaves take Galloudec's whip away, close the cabinet, remove make-up from FirstLove, place Debuissou on the throne, FirstLove as footstool, Galloudec and Sasportas are dressed up as Danton and Robespierre. The theater of the revolution is opened. While the two actors and the public take their places, one hears the dialogue of the parents from the cabinet.*

*Father:* That is the resurrection of the flesh. For the worm gnaws eternally and the fire never goes out. *Mutter:* Is he whoring around again. Crickcrack now my heart is broken, just look. *Vater:* I'll give her to you, my son. I'll give you them both, black or white. *Mutter:* Take the knife out of my belly. You painted sluts. *Father:* On your knees, Canaille [French: bastard], and beg your mother's blessing. *Mother:* THERE ABOVE ON THE MOUNTAIN / THERE THE WIND BLOWS WILD / THERE SLAUGHTERED MARIA / THE HEAVENLY CHILD. Home to Greenland. Come my children. There the sun keeps you warm every day. *Father:* Shut her idiotic trap already. SASPORTASROBESPIERRE Go to your place, Danton, in the pillory of history. Just look at the freeloader, who gobbles up the bread of the hungry. The sex fiend, who violates the daughters of the people. The traitor, who wrinkles his nose at the smell of blood, with which the revolution washes the body of the new society. Should I tell you why you can't stand the sight of blood, Danton. Did you say revolution. The reach for the flesh-pots was your revolution. The free ticket into the bordello. For that you sprayed yourself in the lickspittle applause of the rabble. The lion, which licks the boots of the aristocrats. Do you like the taste of the spit of the Bourbons. Are you keeping yourself warm, stuck up the ass of the monarchy. Did you say courage. Just shake your powdered mane. You won't mock the name of virtue any longer than it takes your head to fall from the axe of justice. You can't say that I didn't warn you, Danton. Now the guillotine will speak to you, the noble invention of the new epoch, which will stride over you just like all traitors. You'll understand its language, you spoke it well in September. *Slaves strike off Galloudec's Danton-head, throw it to each other. Galloudec succeeds in catching it, he holds it under his arm.* Why don't you put your beautiful head between your legs, Danton, where your reason sits next to the lice of your dissipations and the sores of your blasphemies.

*Sasportas knocks Galloudec's Danton-head from under his arm. Galloudec crawls after the head, puts it on.*

GALLOUDEC DANTON Now it's my turn. Just look at the ape with the broken jawbone. The blood-sucker, who can't hold his drool. Did you bite off more than you can chew. The incorruptible one, with your preaching of virtue. That's the thanks of the Fatherland: a gendarme's fist. *Slaves tears Sasportas' chin-bandage from the Robespierre-head, the chin falls down. While Sasportas searches for the chin-bandage and the jawbone.* Did you drop something. Are you missing anything. Property is theft. Do you feel the wind in your neck. That is freedom. *Sasportas has found the chin-binding and jawbone again and reassembles the Robespierre-head.* Be careful that you don't lose your clever head completely, Robespierre, thanks to the love of the people. Did you say revolution. The axe of justice, right. The guillotine is no bread-factory. Thrift [Wirtschaft: thrift, economy], thrift, Horatio. *Slaves knock off Sasportas' Robespierre-head and use it as soccer ball.* That is equality. LONG LIVE THE REPUBLIC. Didn't I tell you: you were next. *Joins in the soccer scrimmage with slaves.* That is fraternity. *SasportasRobespierre howls.* What do you have against soccer. Entre nous [French: just between us]: should I tell you, why you were so keen on my beautiful head. I'll bet, if you dropped your trousers, dust would fall out. Ladies and gentlemen. The theater of the revolution is open. The main attraction: the man without a lower half. Maximilian the Great. Virtue Max. The armchair-farter. The wanker from Arras. The bloody Robespierre.

SASPORTAS ROBESPIERRE *puts head back on:* My name stands in the pantheon of history.

GALLOUDEC DANTON

A LITTLE DWARF STOOD IN THE FOREST

STILL AND WITHOUT SOUND

HE WAS DRESSED IN ROYAL PURPLE

A TINY MANTLE ROUND

SASPORTAS ROBESPIERRE Parasite syphilitic aristocratic flunky.

GALLOUDEC DANTON hypocrite eunuch lackey of Wall Street.

SASPORTAS ROBESPIERRE Swine.

GALLOUDEC DANTON Hyena.

*They strike each other's heads off. Debuisson applauds. Slaves drag him from throne, put Sasportas on it. Galloudec as footstool. Coronation of Sasportas.*

SASPORTAS The theater of the white revolution is now over. We sentence you to death, Victor Debuisson. Because your skin is white. Because your thoughts are white underneath your white skin. Because your eyes have seen the beauty of our sisters. Because your hands have touched the nakedness of our sisters. Because your thoughts have eaten their breasts, their bodies, their crotch [Scham]. Because you are a property-owner, Victor Debuisson. That's why we sentence you to death, Victor Debuisson. The snakes will eat your shit, the crocodiles your ass, the piranhas your balls. *Debuisson cries out.* What's wrong with you is, you cannot die. That's why you kill everything around you. For your Total Order [Ordnungen: order, organization], in which ecstasy has no place. For your revolution without sex. Do you love this woman. We'll take her, so that you die easier. Who does not own, dies easier. What else belongs to you. Say quick, our school is time, it does not come again and no breathing space for didactics, whoever

doesn't learn dies too. Your skin. From who did you skin it from. Your flesh our hunger. Your blood empties our veins. Your thoughts, right. Who sweats for your philosophies. Even your urine and your shit are exploitation and slavery. Not to mention your sperm: the distillate of dead bodies. Now nothing belongs to you any more. Now you are nothing. Now you can die. Bury him.

I stand between men, who I don't know, in an old elevator whose metal cage clatters while going up. I'm dressed like a salaried employee or like a worker on holiday. I'm even wearing a tie, the collar chafes my neck, I'm sweating. When I move my head, the collar constricts my throat. I have a meeting with the boss (in my thoughts I name him Number One), his office is in the fourth floor, or was it the twentieth; no sooner have I thought about it than I'm not sure anymore. The message of my meeting with the boss (who in my thoughts I name Number One) reached me in the basement, an extensive area with empty cement rooms and air raid signs for civil defense. I assume, it's a matter of a mission, which is to be entrusted to me. I check the fit of my tie and pull the knot tight. I wish I had a mirror, so that I could visually check the fit of the tie. Impossible, to ask a stranger how your tie looks. The ties of the other men in the elevator are fastened impeccably. Some of them seem to know each other. They speak softly about something, which I can't make out. In any case their conversation must have distracted me: at the next stop, I read the number eight on the indicator atop the elevator in fright. I've gone too far or I still have half of the distance to go. What's crucial is the element of time. FIVE MINUTES EARLY / IS TRUE PUNCTUALITY. The last time I looked at my wristwatch, it was ten. I remember my feeling of relief: still fifteen minutes until my meeting with the boss. The next time it was only five minutes later. When I look at my watch again just now, between the eighth and ninth floors, it's exactly fourteen minutes and forty-five seconds past the hour of ten: true punctuality is over with, time is no longer working for me. Quickly I assess my situation: I can get out at the next stop and run down the stairs, three steps at once, all the way to the fourth floor. If it's the wrong floor, that would mean of course a perhaps irrecoverable loss of time. I can keep going to the twentieth floor and, if the boss's office isn't there, return to the fourth floor, provided the elevator doesn't go out of order, or rush down the stairs (three steps at once), where I could break my legs or my neck precisely because I'm hurrying. I already see myself in the funeral bier, which is according to my last wishes borne into the office of the boss and placed before his desk, still in service, but no longer fit to serve. For the time being everything hinges on the question which can't be answered in advance, thanks to my negligence, of which floor the boss (who I name Number One in my thoughts) is waiting for me with an important mission. (It must be an important mission, otherwise he would've assigned it through an underling). A quick glance at the time made it irrefutably clear to me that in fact it has been far too late for simple punctuality for some time, although our elevator, on second glance, has not yet reached the twelfth floor: the hour-hand stands at ten, the minute-hand at fifteen, the seconds have long since ceased to matter. Something seems to be wrong with my watch, but there isn't any time for a time-check: I am, without realizing it, alone in the elevator. With a chill, which reaches into my scalp, I see the hands on my watch circle the dial with increasing speed, I can't tear away my eyes from it, between the bats of an eyelid more and more hours pass by. It dawns on me that something was wrong for some time: with my watch, with this elevator, with the time. I plunge into wild speculations: gravity has ceased to function, a

disturbance, a kind of stutter in the earth's rotation, like a muscle cramp during soccer. I regret that I know too little of physics to come up with a scientific explanation of the flagrant contradiction between the speed of the elevator and the passage of time shown on my watch. Why didn't I pay attention in school. Or read the wrong books: poetry instead of physics. The time is out of joint and somewhere in the fourth or twentieth floor (the or cuts like a knife through my negligent brain) in a spacious and plushly-appointed room my boss (who I in my thoughts call Number One) waits behind his desk, which probably stands in the far end of the room facing the entrance, with the mission for me, the loser. Perhaps the world is going out of whack and my mission, which was so important, that the boss wanted to assign it to me in person, has already become meaningless thanks to my negligence. NOT OPERATIVE in the language of the administrators, which I've learned so well (useless knowledge!), ON FILE, which noone will check anymore, because they contained the last possible measures against the catastrophe, whose beginning I'm now experiencing, locked into this elevator gone insane with a wristwatch gone haywire. Desperate dream within the dream: simply by rolling myself up, I have the ability to transform my body into a projectile, which catches up with time by shooting through the roof of the elevator. Cold awakening in the slow elevator glancing at the speeding watch. I imagine Number One's despair. His suicide. His head, whose portrait decorates all the public offices, on the desk. Blood from a black-edged hole in the (probably right) temple. I didn't hear a shot, but that proves nothing, the walls of his office are of course soundproof, such incidents have been taken into account during construction and what happens in the office of the boss is not the concern of the population, it's lonely at the top. I leave the elevator at the next stop and stand without a mission in a village street in Peru, the now useless tie still ludicrously fastened underneath my chin. Dried-out mud with wheel-tracks. On both sides of the street dull plains with occasional clumps of grass and flecks of gray bushes stretch to the horizon, where a mountain range floats in mist. Left of the street a barracks-like building, it looks deserted, the windows are black holes with shards of glass. Before a billboard with ads for products of a foreign civilization stand two enormous inhabitants. A menace emanates from their backs. I consider whether I should retreat, not having been seen yet. I never thought, during my desperate ascent to the boss, that I could feel homesick for the elevator, which was my prison. How am I supposed to explain my presence in this no-man's-land. I have no parachute to show, no airplane or auto wreck. Who would believe that I came to Peru in an elevator, in front and behind me the street, flanked by the plain, which stretches to the horizon. How is any sort of communication going to be possible, I don't know the language of this country, I might as well be deaf and dumb. It would be better if I were deaf and dumb: perhaps there's compassion in Peru. My only option is flight into what's hopefully empty of human beings, perhaps from one death into another, but I prefer hunger to the murderer's knife. In any case I have no means of buying my freedom, with my few bills of foreign currency. Fate won't even grant me the opportunity to die in action, my cause [Sache: matter, case, job] is a lost cause [Sache], the employee of a dead boss, that's me, my mission enclosed in his brain, which no longer relinquishes anything, on this side of death, until the vaults of eternity are opened, on whose combination the sages in the world toil. Hopefully not too late I loosen my tie, whose correct fit cost me so much sweat on my way to the boss, and slip the conspicuous article of clothing into my jacket. I almost threw it away, a clue. Turning around I see the village

for the first time; clay and straw, through an open door a hammock. Cold sweat at the thought, I could be observed from there, but I can't make out any sign of life, the only moving thing is a dog, which rummages in a smoldering trash-heap. I've hesitated too long: the men tear detach themselves from the poster and come diagonally across the street towards me, at first without looking at me. I see the faces looming over me, indistinct black the one blurred and black, the eyes white, the gaze impossible to make out: the eyes are without pupils. The head of the other is made of grey silver. A long quiet glance from eyes, whose color I can't determine, something red gleams in them. A twitch runs through the fingers of the heavy right hand dangling down, it also appears to consist of silver, the blood-vessels glow from the metal. The silver one passes by me behind the black one. My fear vanishes and makes way for disappointment: aren't I even worth a knife or the strangle-hold of hands made of metal. Wasn't there something like contempt in the quiet gaze, which sized me up for five steps. What's my crime. The world hasn't ended, provided that this isn't some other world. How do you fulfill an unknown mission. What can my mission be in this lost district beyond civilization. How is an employee supposed to know, what goes on in the head of the boss. No science in the world can drag my lost mission out of the brain-tissue of the deceased. He'll be buried with them, the state funeral, which perhaps is already taking place, doesn't guarantee the resurrection. Something like jocularly wells up in me, I fold my jacket over my arm and unbuttoned the shirt: my walk is a stroll. Before me the dog runs over the street, a hand sideways in its snout, the fingers are turned towards me, they look burnt. Young men bar my path, with a threat, which isn't meant for me. Where the street runs out into the plains, a woman stands poised, almost as if she expected me. I hold out my arms for her, how long have we not touched a woman, and hear a man's voice saying THIS WOMAN IS THE WIFE OF A MAN. The tone is final and I keep going. When I look back, the woman is still holding out her arms for me and bares her breasts. On a railway embankment overgrown with grass two boys are tinkering at a cross between a steam engine and a locomotive, which stands on abandoned tracks. I European see at first glance, that their labor is in vain: this locomotive won't move, but I don't say this to the kids, work is hope, and keep going into the landscape, which has no other job than to wait for the disappearance of humanity. I know my destination now. I cast off my clothes, external appearances don't matter anymore. Eventually THE OTHER will meet me, the antipode, the doppelganger with my face out of snow. One of us will survive.

*Debuisson. Galloudec. Sasportas.*

DEBUISSON *gives Galloudec a paper. Galloudec and Sasportas read.* The government which gave us our mission, to organize a slave rebellion on Jamaica, is no longer in office. General Bonaparte dissolved the Directory with the bayonets of his grenadiers. France is Napoleon. The world is what it was, a homeland for masters and slaves. *Galloudec crumples up paper.* Don't give me that look. Our firm is no longer in the business-register. It's bankrupt. The goods we were selling, payable in the national currencies blood sweat tears, aren't traded anymore in this world. *Tears up the paper.* I discharge us from our mission. You, Galloudec, the peasants of Brittany. You, Sasportas, the son of slavery. Me, Debuisson.

SASPORTAS *softly:* The son of slave-holders.

DEBUISSON To each their own freedom or slavery. Our play is over, Sasportas. Watch out when you take off your make-up, Galloudec. Perhaps your skin will go with it. Your mask, Sasportas, is your face. My face is my mask.

*Holds face in hands.*

GALLOUDEC Not so fast, Debuisson. I'm a peasant, I cannot think so quickly. I've risked my neck for a year and longer, preached my voice to shreds at secret meetings, smuggled weapons through cordons of blood-hounds, sharks and turncoats, played the fool at the tables of English cutthroats as your dog, been burnt by the sun and wasted by the fever on this goddamned continent without snow, all for this lazy mass of black flesh, which doesn't want to move except under the boot, and what's slavery in Jamaica to me anyway, when you look at it, I'm French, just a moment, Sasportas, but I'll turn black on the spot if I can understand, why all that isn't true anymore and cancelled out and for nothing, no more mission, because a general in Paris is feeling his oats. He's not even French. But when I hear you talk, Debuisson, you'd think that you were waiting for this General Bonaparte all along.

DEBUISSON Maybe I did wait for this General Bonaparte. Just like half of France waited for him. Revolution is tiring, Galloudec. In the sleep of the peoples the generals stand up and break the yoke of freedom, which is so difficult to bear. Do you realize how much it has twisted your shoulders, Galloudec.

SASPORTAS I don't think I understand you either, Debuisson. Not anymore. The world a homeland for masters and slaves. Slaves have no homeland, Citizen Debuisson. And so long as there are masters and slaves, we are not discharged from our mission. What does a general's coup in Paris have to do with the emancipation of slaves on Jamaica, that's our mission. Ten thousand men wait for our command, for yours, if you want. But it doesn't have to be your voice which gives the command. They aren't asleep, they aren't waiting for a general. They're ready to kill and to die for your YOKE OF FREEDOM, which they've dreamed of their whole lives, which are a daily death, as if for an unknown beloved. They don't ask about the composition of her breasts or the virginity of her crotch. What do these men care about Paris, a distant heap of stones, which was the metropole of their hope for a short time, about France, a land in which the sun cannot kill, where blood was the color of dawn for a short time, on a pale continent beyond the grave of Atlantis. Your general, I've already forgotten his name, no one will talk about him once the names of the liberator of Haiti stands in the schoolbooks.

*Debuisson laughs.*

SASPORTAS You laugh.

DEBUISSON I laugh, Sasportas. Ask me why.

SASPORTAS Could be that I still haven't understood you. I don't know if I should kill you right now or start apologizing to you.

DEBUISSON Do what you want, Sasportas.

SASPORTAS *laughs:* Ah, Debuisson. For a moment I thought what you said was what you really thought. I should've known. I should've known that it was a test. I didn't pass the test, did I. Every one of us must be as cold as a knife, when the sign is given and the battle begins. It's not fear which makes my nerves tremble, but the joy before the dance. I hear the drums before they're being beaten. I hear through my pores, my skin is black. But I doubted you and that isn't good. My apologies, Debuisson. You steeped your hands in blood for our cause [Sache: matter, affair]. I've seen how difficult it was for you. I love

you for both, Debuissou, for he who had to be killed, so that our cause is not betrayed, is of my own kind, and he needed his death before the next torture, as physician and helper of humanity you were supposed to heal him of the consequences of the first one, but he said: kill me so that I cannot betray, and you killed him for our cause as physician and revolutionary. *Sasportas embraces Debuissou.*

DEBUISSON You don't have to apologize, Sasportas, it wasn't a test. Our names won't stand in the schoolbooks, and your liberator of Haiti, where the emancipated Negroes are beating up the emancipated Mulattoes or the other way around, will wait long for his place in the history-book. In the meantime Napoleon will turn France into a barracks and perhaps Europe into a charnel-house, commerce is flourishing in any case, and peace with England won't fail to come, what unites humanity is business. The revolution no longer has a homeland, that's nothing new under this sun, which will perhaps never shine on a new earth, slavery has many faces, we haven't seen its last one, not you, Sasportas, nor us, Galloudec, and perhaps what we thought was the rosy dawn of freedom was only the mask of a new and even more terrible slavery, in comparison to which the rule of the whip in the Caribbean and elsewhere represented only the friendly foretaste of the pleasures of Paradise, and perhaps your unknown beloved, freedom, when its masks are used up, has no other mask but that of betrayal: what you do not betray today, will kill you tomorrow. From the standpoint of human medicine the revolution is a stillbirth, Sasportas: from the Bastille to the Conciergerie, the liberator becomes jailor. DEATH TO THE LIBERATORS is the final truth of the revolution. And as for my murder in the service of our cause: the physician as murderer is no new role in the theater of society, death is of little significance to the helper of humanity: a different chemical state, until the victory of the wasteland every ruin is a building-site against the wrecking-ball of time. Perhaps I only washed my hands, Sasportas, when I steeped them in blood for our cause, poetry was always the language of futility, my black friend. We have other bodies on our necks and they will be our death, if we don't throw them into the pit. Your death is called liberty, Sasportas, your death called is fraternity, Galloudec, my death is called equality. They rode well, when they were our broken-down horses, the wind of tomorrow across our temples. Now the wind blows from yesterday. We are the broken-down horses. Do you notice the spurs in the flesh. Our riders have baggage: the corpses of terror, pyramids of death. Do you feel their weight. With every doubt, which creeps into our brains, they become heavier. A revolution has no time, to count its dead. And now we need our time, to call off the black revolution, which we so thoroughly prepared in the mission of a future, which is already the past just as others before it. Why does the future exist in our language only in the singular, Galloudec. Maybe for the dead it's different, if dust had a voice. Think it over, Sasportas, before you risk your neck for the liberation of the slaves in an abyss, which has no bottom anymore since this message, which I'll now ingest, so that no trace of our work remains. Do you want a scrap too. That was our mission, it tastes of nothing but paper. Tomorrow it will go the way of all flesh, every Holy Ascension has a direction, and maybe the star is already on the way into the cold of outer space, a clump of ice or metal, which punches the final hole in the ground of all things [Tatsachen: facts, factualities], in which we plant our fragile hopes ever and anew. Or the coldness itself, which freezes our yesterdays and tomorrows into an eternal today. Why weren't we born as trees, Sasportas, who aren't concerned with any of this. Or would you rather be a mountain. Or a desert. What do you say, Galloudec. Why are you

looking at me like two stones. Why can't we simply be and watch the war of the landscapes. What do you want from me. Die your own death, if you don't like the taste of life. I won't help you into your graves, I don't like its taste either. Yesterday I dreamed I was walking around New York. The district was run-down and no longer inhabited by whites. Before me on the sidewalk stood a golden serpent, and when I crossed the street or put another way the jungle of boiling metal which was the street, there was another serpent on another sidewalk. It was glowing blue. I knew in my dream: the golden snake is Asia, the blue snake, that's Africa. When I woke up I forget it again. We are three worlds. Why do I know it now. And I heard a voice saying: AND BEHOLD THERE WAS A GREAT EARTHQUAKE AND THE ANGEL OF THE LORD DESCENDED FROM HEAVEN AND ROLLED BACK THE STONE FROM THE DOOR AND SAT UPON IT AND HIS COUNTENANCE WAS LIKE LIGHTNING AND HIS RAIMENTS WHITE AS SNOW. I don't want to know any of that any more. Our three beloveds have been a laughingstock for thousands of years. They've wallowed in all the gutters, splashed through all the sewers of the world, dragged through all the bordellos, our whore liberty, our whore equality, our whore fraternity. Now I want to sit where the laughter is coming from, free to do anything I like, equal to myself, my own and no other brother. Your hide stays black, Sasportas. You stay a peasant, Galloudec. You're being laughed at. My place is where you're being laughed at. I laugh at you. I laugh at the Negro. I laugh at the peasant. I laugh at the Negro, who wants to wash himself white with liberty. I laugh at the peasant who walks in the mask of equality. I laugh at the stupidity of fraternity, which made me, Debuissou, master of four hundred slaves, I need only say yes, yes and yes to the holy order of slavery, blind to your filthy slaves' hide, Sasportas, to your four-legged peasant-tread, Galloudec, the yoke on the back of the neck, with which the oxen drag the furrow in your fields, which don't belong to you. I want my piece of the cake of the world. I'll cut my slice out of the hunger of the world. You, you don't have knives.

SASPORTAS You've torn up my flag. I want to cut a new one out of my black hide. *Cuts a cross in the flat of his hand with his knife.* This is farewell, Citizen Debuissou. *Presses bleeding hand into Debuissou's face.* Do you like the taste of my blood. I said, that slaves have no homeland. That isn't true. The homeland of slaves is rebellion. I go into battle, armed with the humiliations of my life. You've put a new weapon into my hands, and I thank you for it. Can be, my place will be the gallows, and perhaps a rope is already growing around my neck, while I talk with you instead of killing you, for whom I owe nothing besides my knife. But death does not matter, and on the gallows I'll know that my accomplices are the Negroes of all races, whose number grows with every minute, which you spend on your slave-holder's trough or between the thighs of your white whore. When the living can no longer fight, the dead will fight. With every heartbeat of the revolution flesh grows on their bones, blood in their veins, life in their death. The rebellion of the dead will be the war of the landscapes, our weapons the forests, the mountains, the oceans, the deserts of the world. I will be the Forest, Mountain, Ocean, Desert. I – that is Africa. I – that is Asia. I am both Americas.

GALLOUDEC I'll join you, Sasportas. We all have to die, Debuissou. And that is all that we still have in common. After the massacre in Guadeloupe they found a white in the middle of a pile of black corpses, as dead as the rest. That can no longer happen to you, Debuissou. You're out of this.

DEBUISSON Stay. I'm afraid of the beauty of the world, Galloudec. I know well, that it is the mask of betrayal. Don't leave me alone with my mask, which is already growing on my flesh and doesn't even hurt anymore. Kill me before I betray you. I'm afraid, Sasportas, of the shame of being happy in this world.

Said whispered cried out Debuisson. But Galloudec and Sasportas left one after the other, leaving Debuisson alone with betrayal, which stepped towards him like the serpent from the stone. Debuisson closed his eyes against the temptation of looking his first love, which was betrayal, in the face. Betrayal danced. Debuisson pressed his hands to his eyes. He heard his heart beating the rhythm of the dance-steps. They became faster along with the heartbeat. Debuisson felt his lids twitching against his palms. Perhaps the dance stopped already and it was only his heart which pounded, while betrayal, the arms folded across the chest or the hands on the hips or already digging into the lap, with her crotch perhaps already trembling with desire looked from swimming eyes at him, Debuisson, who now pressed his eyes into the sockets with the fists afraid of his hunger for the shame of happiness. Maybe betrayal had already left him. His own greedy hands failed Debuisson. He opened the eyes. Betrayal showed him smilingly her breasts, spread her thighs silently, her beauty struck Debuisson like an axe. He forgot the storming of the Bastille, the hunger-march of the eighty thousand, the end of the Gironde, their last supper, the corpse at the banquet, Saint Just, the black angel, Danton, the voice of the revolution, Marat, crumpled over the dagger, the broken jaw of Robespierre, his scream, when the executioners tore the bandage, his last compassionate glance at the exultant crowd. Debuisson grasped for the last memory, which hadn't yet left him: a sandstorm off Las Palmas, crickets arrived with the sand on the ship and accompanied their journey over the Atlantic. Debuisson ducked against the sandstorm, rubbed the sand from his eyes, covered his ears against the song of the crickets. Then betrayal threw herself on him like a heaven, the bliss of the labia a dawn.