

Flor



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ABIDJAN, IVORY COAST, THREE IN THE MORNING, 1ST OF JANUARY 2006

I wake up in sweat. People are shouting outside, partying for the New Year. The noise is unbearable, I feel sick. My first activity is to throw up. Cramps are torturing my guts.

Flor died yesterday morning. The last day of her life was also the last day of the year. She was just twenty. Had been a prostitute from age sixteen.

She asked me to read the bible for her, holding my hand, telling me with her eyes about her terror of death. Telling me how she preferred French soldiers over Africans. Not so violent.

She got a new dress for Christmas, and kept it in her drawer for the time when she would feel better.

The day before she left, she asked for me. When I entered the room I saw her naked, her body covered with purulent patches. With her last strength she grabbed the bars of her bed and tried to sit up. She couldn't. I hugged her. She was speaking so lightly that I couldn't understand. I stayed with her for a few hours and left. She was telling me not to go, with her eyes. Shaking her head, looking at me. Do not. Do not go away.

I left.

When I came back, she was unconscious. Breathing irregularly. Opening her mouth as if she would break her jaws. Grabbing some air, some more, again... and again.

She died in her sleep, early in the morning. She was so beautiful.

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