

collapsed man and looked over him. He was motionless. I said, “Il est fatigue?”

“Herbert” said to me, “C’est mort.” (“It is dead.”) I put my hand over my mouth. “Herbert” shrugged.

I checked the man’s neck, but felt nothing. Maybe I was doing it wrong. I checked a few times. “Comment?” I said.

The other man who knelt with us began taking the collapsed man’s pants off. “Herbert” took the piccolo out of the man’s pocket and got up. He offered the piccolo to another man in the group. This man took the piccolo and shrugged, patting his head and laughing. The group seemed relieved, many were swinging their arms and laughing.

This disturbed me very much and I walked away from the group. Where did this boy come from? He seemed impaired. What if he was crippled? I felt very troubled and watched the group from afar. “Herbert” walked over to me, humming pleasantly and snapping his fingers. He said, in French, “It is fine. It returns.”

I said, “Non, non. C’est mort. Tu sais.”

He said, “No, it is not there. It returns tomorrow morning.”

“Tomorrow morning?” I said.

“Oui,” he said. “On y va.”

He walked on, fanning the entire group ahead with his hands. They moved on through the woods, the sun beginning to peek out for the first time in my travels.

I continued to follow them and thought, “I’m not responsible for this group. In fact, they’re much older than me, so they know what they’re doing.