

ANONYMOUS

THE REVOLUTION OF SAINT-DOMINGUE (1792)

At the sound of the gunshot, my dog who was lying in the gallery near my bedroom started to bark loud enough to wake me. . . I heard considerable gunshots and the voice of a horde of blacks who filled the house with these terrible words: “Kill, kill.”

Seeing that death was inevitable, I just wanted it to come from a bullet, so that, with the thread of days snapped all at once, I wouldn’t have to suffer the cruel torment that the ferocity of these barbarians was bound to imagine.

Fate decided otherwise: the commander of this bloody horde, named Boukman, whom I had always treated well, arrived at this point and, seeing me in my room . . . had pity on me. He addressed his men and told them firmly: “Don’t kill him, he’s a good white and knows more than the others around here.” . . . I was quite surprised to hear such words because I would not have thought him susceptible, in these circumstances, of so much humanity.

I started a conversation with the two black guards, Jean-Jacques . . . and Vincent. . . I asked them who could be the instigators of such a vast event and what their purpose was in committing so many crimes. They answered that it was the high-ranking whites of France, that their goal was to punish us for having dethroned the king, and because we no longer had either faith, or law, or religion, and because we had burned the royal decree that gave blacks three free days a week at Port-au-Prince. The two blacks said that if they had not received orders from these important whites to revolt in order to contribute to the restoration of the king to his throne, the question that concerned them would not have driven them to such extremes, seeing that in any event they were not intelligent enough and lacked the facilities to conceive of such a vast project, which consisted of nothing less than the destruction of all whites except some who didn’t own property, some priests, some surgeons, and some women, and of setting fire to all the plantations and making themselves masters of the country.

The brigands were greatly affected by the loss of their general, Boukman. After the death of this truly redoubtable leader, they ran this way and that across the plain, making the air resound with this cry: “Boukman is killed, what will become of us!” The same blacks who were in command at Dondon, having learned of his death a few days later, ordered a solemn service.

We made our entry into the town that evening, with the cannon taken from the enemy and the head of Boukman on a pike that was exposed afterward in the Place d’Armes. The satisfaction was general; we thought that the death of one of the most famous chiefs would drive the brigands to sue for peace.

Anonymous, “The First Days of the Slave Insurrection,” in *Taken from Facing Racial Revolution: Eyewitness Accounts of the Haitian Insurrection*, ed. Jeremy D. Popkin (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 50–51, 53, 57–58.