

# REMNANTS

# CÉLINE HUYGHEBAERT

TRANSLATED BY ALESHIA JENSEN

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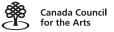
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And I told myself I would forget when he was there, in the white room. I would forget it all. His hands beneath the sheet...

—Laurent Mauvignier, *Apprendre à finir* 







### REMNANTS

DIALOGUES-PRELUDE

9

MAGRITTE'S FACE

15

HANDWRITING ANALYSIS

35

DIALOGUES-I

43

INQUIRY INTO MY FATHER'S PAST

63

DIALOGUES-II

96

**DREAMS** 

101

DIALOGUES-III

109

NOTICE OF BIRTH

147

OR EVEN DEAD ALREADY

149

DIALOGUES-IV

211

INVENTORY OF THINGS THAT LEFT NO TRACE

239

DISAPPEARANCE OF A NAME

241

CARD FROM A FATHER TO HIS DAUGHTER

249

### **DIALOGUES**

### **PRELUDE**

CÉLINE: François?

FRANÇOIS: Yes?

CÉLINE: It's Céline Huyghebaert... How are you?

FRANÇOIS: Good, good. (They both laugh uneasily.) Yourself?

CÉLINE: It's been a long time...

FRANÇOIS: Yes. A long time...

CÉLINE: Is Jeanne there? Can I talk to her?

FRANÇOIS: Of course.

The sound of the receiver placed on the table, muffled voices, crackling.

JEANNE: Hello?

The first thing Céline hears is how much her aunt's voice is like her





father's—stony. Then Jeanne says "Hello?" again and Céline also hears a "No," a categorical refusal that should make her hang up straight away.

CÉLINE: It's Céline. How are you?

JEANNE: I'm well.

CÉLINE: I'm glad I was able to reach you. I left a few messages, but you never returned my calls.

JEANNE: We're only here six months a year now, you know.

CÉLINE: You've got a house somewhere?

JEANNE: No, just a plot of land with a bungalow. We come back to Plaisir for the winter.

CÉLINE: Ah, okay.

JEANNE: And yourself?

CÉLINE: I'm still living in Quebec. I like it. I'm going to school. But I'm in France for a few weeks. It'd be nice to see you while I'm here.

JEANNE: Why's that?

CÉLINE: I'm doing research for a book I'm writing about Papa. I wanted to talk to you about it. And find out how you've been. We haven't seen each other since Papa died.

JEANNE: Well, there's not much I can tell you about him.

CÉLINE: I wanted to know more about when the two of you were



## DIALOGUES-PRELUDE

growing up, what things were like before I was born.

JEANNE: I raised him like a son, and I can't even remember anything about my own sons, so there's really not much I can tell you about your father.

CÉLINE: Maybe if we saw each other in person, a few stories would—

JEANNE: No. No...

CÉLINE: Maybe you could lend me your photo albums so I can scan some pictures of him?

JEANNE: No, that's not possible.

CÉLINE: It's not just for my project. It's for us: his daughters. So we can have something to remember him by.

JEANNE: You've already got pictures of him.

CÉLINE: Not from when he was little.

JEANNE: There aren't very many from back then. We didn't have a camera, you know.

CÉLINE: Even if there are just a few...

JEANNE: I'd have to look around for them. They're buried somewhere. It's not something I can find just like that.

CÉLINE: That's no problem. I could come by this weekend if you like.

JEANNE: Right, well, I'll think about it.



11