

# The Mermaid and The Whale


La Sirène et La Baleine

Lasirèn ak Labalèn

La Sirena y La Ballena



Djenane Saint Juste

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- The Mermaid and The Whale (English)
  - La Sirène et La Baleine (Français)
  - Lasirèn ak Labalèn (Kreyòl)
  - La Sirena y La Ballena (Español)

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Djenane Saint Juste



KRIK...

KRAK!

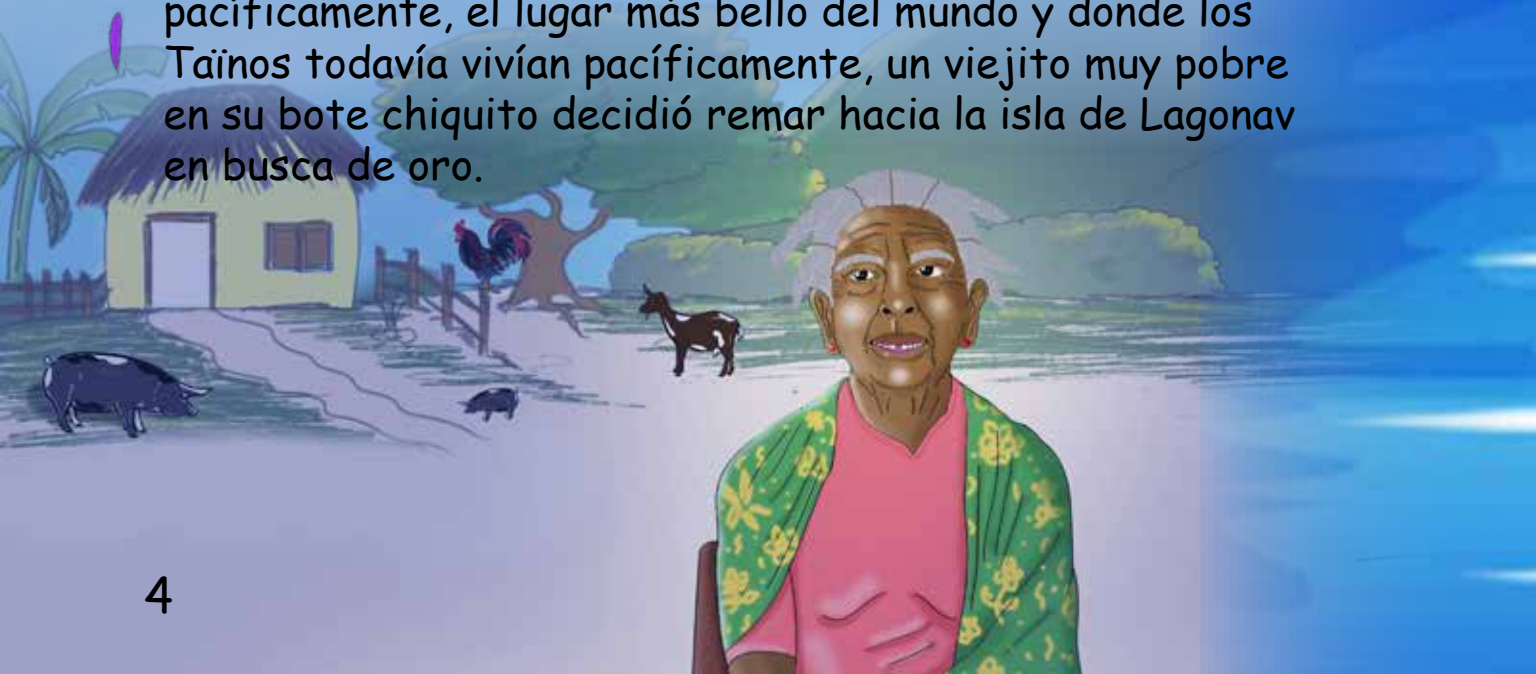


Nan tan lontan, yon bon ti bout tan de sa, nan tan moun  
Tayino yo t ap viv nan lapè nan zile d Ayiti, kote ki te pi bèl  
sou latè, te gen yon pèsònaj, yon nonm pòv nan yon ti bato ki  
t ap prale nan zile Lagonav pou l chache lò.

A long time ago, at the time when the Tainos were still  
living peacefully in Haiti, the most beautiful place on earth,  
there was a poor man in a little boat going to the island of  
Lagonav to find gold.

Il y a très longtemps, à l'époque où les Tainos vivaient  
encore en paix en Haïti, le plus beau pays du monde, un vieil  
homme dans un petit bateau partait en direction de l'île de  
La Gonâve pour y chercher de l'or.

Érase una vez en Haití, donde los Tainos todavía vivían  
pacíficamente, el lugar más bello del mundo y donde los  
Tainos todavía vivían pacíficamente, un viejito muy pobre  
en su bote chiquito decidió remar hacia la isla de Lagonav  
en busca de oro.





Kè malere a pa t janm ka kontan paske li te pòv, li pa t posede pi plis pase yon ti bato, kèk vye ranyon ak yon vye chapo. Pèsonaj la te rete kwè, si l ale zile Lagonav, l ap jwenn anpil lò, li t ap vin yon gran nèg, li t ap rich epi, tou, li t ap kontan anpil.

The poor man was always sad because he had no possessions except for his little boat, some ragged old clothes, and his hat. The man was convinced that, if he went to Lagonav, he would find gold and then he would be wealthy and happy.

Le pauvre homme était toujours triste parce qu'il ne possédait rien à l'exception de son petit bateau, de quelques vieux vêtements en loques et de son chapeau. Il était convaincu que, s'il atteignait La Gonâve, il y trouverait de l'or et deviendrait riche et heureux.

Aquel hombre siempre estaba triste porque no tenía riquezas, salvo su pequeño bote, sus viejas ropas y su sombrero. El viejito estaba convencido de que en la isla de Lagonav encontraría oro y, entonces, sería rico y feliz.



- Se kon sa misye pran ti bato li, vye ranyon li ak vye chapo li epi li pati pou l al chache lò sou zile Lagonav.
- Thus, he sailed on, wearing his ragged old clothes and his hat to find gold in Lagonav island.
- C'est ainsi qu'il prit la mer pour l'île de La Gonâve pour y chercher de l'or - ses vêtements en loques sur le dos et son chapeau sur la tête.
- Y así, navegó, con su vieja ropa y su sombrero, rumbo a la isla de Lagonav para encontrar oro.





Jou sa a, solèy la te apèn ap balize dèyè mòn yo pou li leve. Syèl la te bèl. Te genyen yon ti van ki t ap soufle tou dous, ou ta di li te anvi fè lanmè a danse. Men, lanmè a, kou yon jèn ti demwazèl k ap fè kapris, pa t anvi rantre nan won avèk ti van ki t ap taye banda sa a.

That day, the sky was lifting in all its blue glory, the rising sun tinged with a golden hue. The winds were dancing steadily and graciously around, inviting the sea to join the party. Unfortunately, the sea would not join the party, remaining still, as a stubborn pouting child.

Ce jour-là, le ciel était d'un bleu glorieux, le soleil levant rayonnait d'une teinte dorée. Le vent dansait gracieusement et invitait la mer à se joindre à la fête. Cependant, la mer ne se mêla pas à la fête, restant immobile, telle une enfant têtue qui boude.

Aquel día, el cielo se mostraba de un azul glorioso. El sol naciente tenía un magnífico tinte dorado y los vientos bailando graciosos y rítmicos, invitaban al mar a unirse a la fiesta. Pero el mar no quiso, y permanecía quieto, lloriqueando como un niño obstinado.



Yon ti moman aprè, pèsonaj la tandè yon ti mizik dous k ap soti an ba lanmè a, pa twò lwen ti bato a. Menm kote a, li wè yon bagay k ap fofile byen vit an ba dlo a. Yon sèl kou devan je li, lanmè a vin byen bèl ak koulè ble li a.

Soon, a very pleasant sound, not too far away, caught the attention of the man. He immediately noticed something strange moving quickly on the ocean under the morning light.

Très vite, l'homme fut attiré par un son agréable et très proche. Dans la lumière matinale, l'homme remarqua une chose étrange qui se déplaçait rapidement à la surface de l'eau. Dans un clin d'oeil, la mer devint belle avec sa couleur bleue.

De repente, un sonido cercano, muy agradable, llamó la atención del hombre que, al momento, notó en el océano algo extraño moviéndose veloz hacia la superficie.



Nan fè ti jouda li, misye a kòmanse pagaye pou li ale wè ki sa k ap pase an ba lanmè sila. Li kòmanse pagaye pi vit pou li te ka pwoche pi pre. Men, se kon sa li t ap pwoche, se kon sa tou kòm ki dire syèl la t ap disparèt sou tèt li, epi tan an te kòmanse fèmen kòm si solèy la t ap pral kouche epi lalin lan te kòmanse anvi souri, epi lanmè a, ki te sispann fè kapris, rale gran talatàn ble digo li pou li danse yon dans kongo avèk van an k ap soufle yon son lanmou ki ka koupe souf ou.

Curious, the poor, sad man paddled as fast as he could to reach the moving thing under the glorious Caribbean light. As he approached closer and closer, the sea suddenly became alive and joined the party as it finally began to dance a flirtatious kongo dance with the winds.

Sous la glorieuse lumière des Caraïbes, le pauvre homme, triste et curieux, ramait vite pour atteindre cette chose mouvante. Alors qu'il s'en approchait, la mer prit soudain vie, et se joigna à la fête en dansant un kongo pour séduire les vents.

Intrigado, el hombre pobre y triste remó tan rápido como pudo bajo la gloriosa luz del Caribe para alcanzar aquello que se movía. A medida que se acercaba más y más, el mar de repente cobró vida y se unió a la fiesta bailando un "Kongo" coqueteando con los vientos.



Epi... epi... « PLACH ! », an ba lanmè a, yon sèl kou, yon bèl fanm vole soti. Li klere si w konn miwa dè zanj. Se te Mètrès Lasirèn. Epi... epi... yon lòt « PLACH ! » ankò, yon lòt bèl fanm parèt, tout kòl klere ak lò. Se te Labalèn — sè Mètrès Lasirèn.

At that moment in a splash, from under the ocean emerged the most mysterious and beautiful creature, "Lasirèn", the mermaid. Then, in another splash, from under the ocean, appeared "Labalèn", the whale, as her sister, "Lasirèn", swam graciously around the little boat.

À ce moment précis, une énorme éclaboussure retentit, et du fond de l'océan jaillit une merveilleuse créature : la Sirène. Soudain, une autre éclaboussure surgit : la Baleine, alors que sa soeur, la Sirène, nageait gracieusement autour du petit bateau.

En aquel momento, del océano surgió, como un torbellino, la criatura más misteriosa y bella, "Lasirèn", una sirena. Luego, otro remolino, y del fondo del océano apareció "Labalèn", una ballena, juntándose con su hermana, "Lasirèn", que nadaba majestuosamente alrededor del pequeño bote.





Woy... viewo a pa t ka konprann anyen nan sa ki t ap fèt la. Èske se rèv oubyen reyalite ? Tankou yon vye kapon, misye kòmanse tranble. Li te tou pè gade Lasirèn ak Labalèn k ap sote, chante, danse, vire e fè bèl piwèt tout a rebò ti bato li a. Men, tou, vwa 2 mètrès yo te tèlman dous, dans lan te tèlman bèl, an plis mètrès yo te tèlman klere, yo te bay gou damou. Tankou 2 leman, mètrès yo rale viewo a nan manigans yo jis misye tonbe nan pyèj la epi li kòmanse danse epi li kòmanse chante nan ti bato li a ki kòmanse sekwe a dwat, sekwe a goch.

At first the man was frightened to see these two mythical creatures dancing, singing and twirling around his boat; but, seduced by the graceful movement and the beautiful song of « Lasirèn » and « Labalèn », the man started to dance as well.

Dans un premier temps, l'homme a eu peur. Mais petit à petit il fut séduit par le mouvement gracieux et les chants de ces deux créatures mythiques tournoyant autour de son bateau et il se mit à danser avec elles.

Al principio, el hombre se asustó al ver a estas dos criaturas míticas bailando, cantando y dando vueltas alrededor de su bote; pero, seducido por el elegante movimiento y la hermosa canción de « Lasirèn » y « Labalèn », el hombre también comenzó a bailar.



Epi... epi... woy !!! Chapo viewo a tonbe nan lanmè a.  
« Tchouboum ! », viewo a plonje nan lanmè a pou li pa pèdi  
vye chapo l. Men, Lasirèn ak Labalèn kouri pran chapo a epi,  
tankou 2 ti moun k ap jwe lago kache, yo plonje ak li nan fon  
lanmè a.

As he was dancing and twirling joyfully on his boat, his hat  
fell into the sea. Quickly, the man jumped in to get his hat  
back, but the mermaid already had retrieved it, swimming  
away in her underwater kingdom, followed by the whale.

Alors qu'il dansait et tournoyait joyeusement dans son  
bateau, son chapeau tomba dans la mer. L'homme sauta vite  
par dessus bord pour le rattraper. Mais la Sirène l'avait  
déjà récupéré, nageant au loin, dans les profondeurs de son  
royaume aquatique, suivie par la Baleine.

Mientras bailaba y giraba alegremente en el bote, su  
sombrero cayó al mar. Ágil, el hombre saltó al agua para  
recuperar su sombrero, pero la sirena ya lo había tomado, y  
nadaba a lo lejos, hacia las profundidades de su reino,  
seguida de la ballena.



Li naje, li naje, li naje pou l pouswiv mètrès yo jis, li menm tou, li disparèt nan fon lanmè tou ble a.

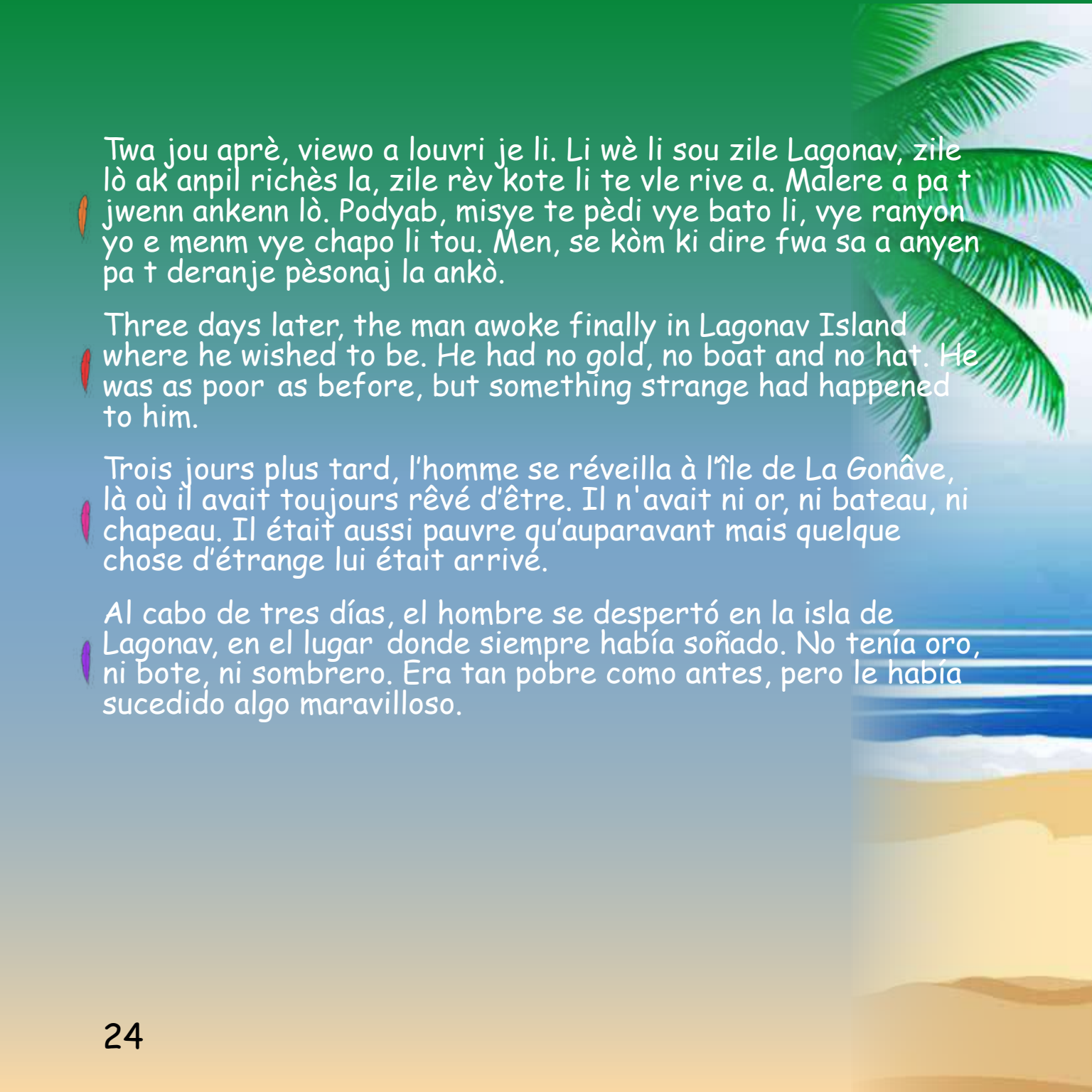
The man followed the mythical creatures deeper and deeper until he himself disappeared under the watery kingdom.

L'homme partit à la poursuite des créatures mythiques en nageant de plus en plus en profondeur. Puis il disparut dans le royaume au fond des mers.

El hombre nadaba y nadaba, siguiendo a aquellas criaturas míticas hasta que desapareció bajo las profundidades del océano.







Twa jou aprè, viewo a louvri je li. Li wè li sou zile Lagonav, zile lò ak anpil richès la, zile rèv kote li te vle rive a. Malere a pa t jwenn ankenn lò. Podyab, misye te pèdi vye bato li, vye ranyon yo e menm vye chapo li tou. Men, se kòm ki dire fwa sa a anyen pa t deranje pèsonaj la ankò.

Three days later, the man awoke finally in Lagonav Island where he wished to be. He had no gold, no boat and no hat. He was as poor as before, but something strange had happened to him.

Trois jours plus tard, l'homme se réveilla à l'île de La Gonâve, là où il avait toujours rêvé d'être. Il n'avait ni or, ni bateau, ni chapeau. Il était aussi pauvre qu'auparavant mais quelque chose d'étrange lui était arrivé.

Al cabo de tres días, el hombre se despertó en la isla de Lagonav, en el lugar donde siempre había soñado. No tenía oro, ni bote, ni sombrero. Era tan pobre como antes, pero le había sucedido algo maravilloso.



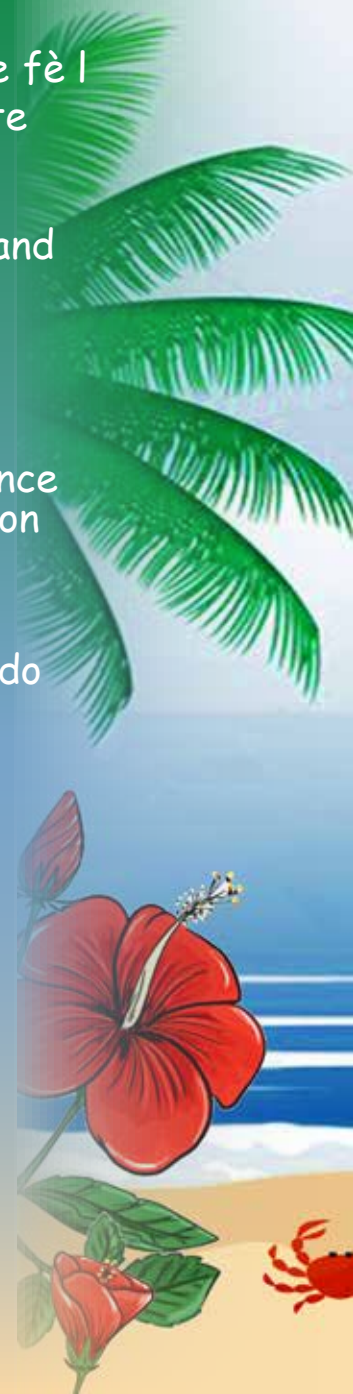


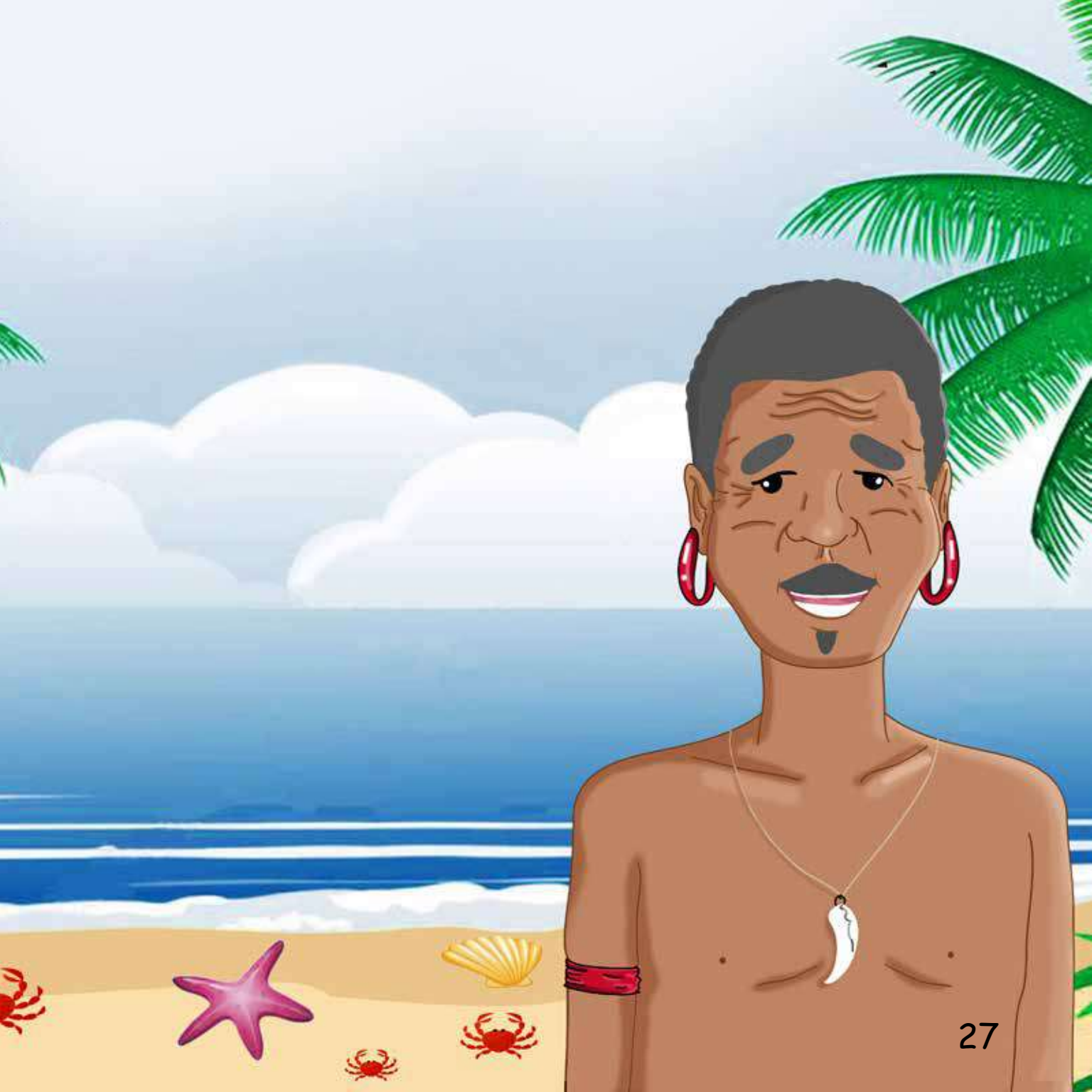
Kè misye te finalman kontan. Vwayaj an ba lanmè a te fè l jwenn « konesans ». Li te dekouvri lò li t ap cache a se te renmen ak kontantman ki soti nan fon kè.

The man was happy; he had gained "konesans" (wisdom) and his journey under the watery kingdom made him realize that the real gold was happiness into his heart.

L'homme était finalement heureux. Il avait acquis beaucoup de connaissance (sagesse). Son séjour dans le royaume au fond des mers lui avait fait prendre conscience que l'or véritable était le bonheur qui se trouvait dans son cœur.

El viejito se sentía feliz; había ganado en sabiduría (konesans), su viaje al reino de las aguas le había enseñado que el verdadero oro es la felicidad en el fondo de su corazón.





- Alòs, pandan mwen t ap pase bò zile Lagonav la, mwen tande viewo a k ap chante byen fò san rete ak kè kontan.
- And as I was walking close by, I heard the man singing joyfully.
- Alors que je marchais non loin de l'île de la Gonâve, je l'entendis chanter joyeusement.
- Y mientras yo caminaba a su lado, oí como cantaba alegremente.





## Lasirèn ak Labalèn chante/song/chant/canción

1.

Lasirèn, Labalèn, chapo m tonbe nan lanmè.

O mermaid, o whale, my hat fell into the sea.

O sirène, o baleine, mon chapeau est tombé dans la mer.

O sirena, o ballena, mi sombrero cayó al mar.

2.

Lasirèn, Labalèn, chapo m tonbe nan lanmè.

O mermaid, o whale, my hat fell into the sea.

O sirène, o baleine, mon chapeau est tombé dans la mer.

O sirena, o ballena, mi sombrero cayó al mar.

3.

Mwen t ap danse ak Lasirèn, chapo m tonbe nan lanmè.

I was dancing with the mermaid, when my hat fell into the sea.

Je dansais avec la sirène, quand mon chapeau est tombé dans la mer.

Estaba bailando con la sirena, cuando mi sombrero cayó al mar.

4.

Mwen t ap vire ak Labalèn, chapo m tonbe nan lanmè,

I was twirling with the whale, when my hat fell into the sea.

Je tournoyais avec la baleine, quand mon chapeau est tombé dans la mer.

Estaba dando vueltas con la ballena, cuando mi sombrero cayó al mar.

# Lasirèn, Labalèn

As recorded by Mme. Florencia "Fofò" Pierre

8



La - si - rèn, La - ba - lèn\_\_ cha - po m ton - be nan lan - mè\_\_

5



La - si - rèn, La - ba - lèn\_\_ cha - po m ton - be nan lan - mè\_\_ Mwen

9



t ap dan - se ak La - si - rèn,\_\_ cha - po m ton - be nan lan - mè\_\_ Mwen

13



t ap vi - re ak La - ba - lèn\_\_ cha - po m ton - be nan lan - mè\_\_

## Glossary

**Ayiti:** the original name of the island of Hispaniola, given by the Tainos. Ayiti means "land of high mountains".

**Konesans:** meaning knowledge, wisdom (in the Vodou religion, a higher wisdom from the "Lwa" spirits).

**Kongo:** a folkloric Haitian Dance associated with the Congo nation in Africa. It is a flirtatious, mostly partner dance, with live drumming. Dancers and audience alike enjoy the shape of the moving skirt, the contagious smile, and the shaking of the hips.

**Krik - Krak:** A call-and-response used by Haitian storytellers to get the audience's attention and interest. The storyteller calls, with enthusiasm, "Krik!", and the audience, eager to listen, always responds, "Krak!", meaning that they are ready to listen.

**La Gonâve:** Gonâve Island, called "Guanabo" by the Tainos people, is an island of Haiti located west-northwest of Port-au-Prince. Florencia Pierre, one of the storytellers and singer of the book, was born in Lagonav, and her love for her island inspired her daughter Djenane Saint Juste to write the story of "Lasirèn ak Labalèn" to honor the people of the island.

**Lasirèn ak Labalèn:** The mermaid and the whale are considered very mythical creatures in Haiti. In the Vodou religion, Lasirèn is the wife of Mèt Agwe, and she owns a beautiful palace beneath the seas.

**Tāinos:** Indigenous people, the first inhabitants of Haiti and other Caribbean islands at the time of European invasion in the late fifteenth century.

**Note:** Haitian storytellers have the ability to travel in time with their characters. They can travel in the past, the future, and back to the present as they are the bridge in between their characters and their audiences.



## La carte d'Haïti



## Acknowledgments

Writing books has always been one of my secret dreams. Since the moment I learned how to read, my imagination became very productive, creating numerous characters that would inspire my everyday life in my lovely native country, Haiti. However, my spelling was all over the place, and, to make matters worse, one of my teachers one day corrected my writing in front of my peers. I was ashamed and so traumatized by this experience that I stopped writing for a while. Even as an adult and an educator, I still feel anxious whenever I have to write something important that others will read. Therefore, I decided to face my greatest fear and embrace my dream and challenge myself to grow as a person and a writer.

As I embarked on this new journey of being a writer, none of this experience would have been possible without my mother Florencia Pierre and my son Hassen Ortega. They both stood by me during every struggle and success with their heart full of love, acceptance, forgiveness, patience, and compassion. *Mwen di Granmèt la ak Ginen yo mèsì anpil dèskè yo mete nou nan lavi mwen.* Mom and Hassen, thank you not only for being the most amazing people in my life but also for being the most amazing contributors to this story. Jude Vales, Florencia Pierre, and Hassen Ortega: The audio recording of the storytelling absolutely needed your voice, your strength, and passion in order to become alive and bring love and blessings to our readers.

Writing my first book without any previous experience was a very ambitious and difficult process. Yet having the right team, with the right intention to help you succeed and reach your dream, made the process effortless. I am very grateful to my friends Marie Olivier Mabilia Moussavou and Beau A. J Pierre Louis for the preliminary illustration ideas. Many thanks to Florencia Pierre, Eberle Fort, Eric Coursen, Laura Thelander and her husband Arthur Murray, and their two talented children, Pierre Richard Murray and Richenard Murray, for adding the magical and lovely sounds of Caribbean life to the audio recording song of *Lasirèn ak Labalèn*. Thank you to John Paul "J.P" Douglas for working on the musical annotation, you are one of a kind, my friend! One more time, thank you to everyone for adding "el sazón caribeño" that this book needed.

Finally, I say "Je vous remercie de tout coeur" to all those who have been a part of my getting there: Amy Brisben, Camille Chalmers, Jimmy Diligent, Jean Dominique Denis, Max Blanchet, Rosa Parés Canela, Sylvie Carien Smith, and Sophie Toner.

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Djenane Saint Juste, a native of Haiti, is an educator, a storyteller and writer. She is the Artistic Director of Afoutayi Haitian Dance, Music and Arts Company. She is a professional choreographer, dancer, actress and vocalist specializing in Haitian traditional dance and folklore. Djenane has also been trained in Ballet, Hip Hop, Modern, Jazz and Ballroom at the Institut de Danse JAKA, Institut de Danse Vivianne Gauthier, and Artcho Dance Company in Haiti. She is the creator and instigator of the Annual Haitian Cultural Festival, and has brought exciting new themes and activities to engage participants in Haitian culture since the first Haitian Festival in 2009.

Djenane has dedicated herself to the research, development and promotion of traditional Haitian dance, song and storytelling. She is currently an artist in residence for COMPAS, the Cowles center, and she is a former faculty member in the world dance department at the Saint Paul Conservatory for the Performing Arts, and an artist in residence at Hamline University, the University of Minnesota, and St. Olaf University. Djenane's work towards the preservation of Haitian culture has been documented in works such as "Making Caribbean Dance" by Susanna Sloat, as well as "Lavil: Life, Love, and Death in Port-au-Prince (Voice of Witness)" by Peter Orner, Evan Lyon, and Edwidge Danticat.

For more information  
about Djenane Saint Juste,  
visit: <https://www.afoutayidmaco.com>

## Moun ki rakonte istwa - Storytellers - Conteurs - Cuentacuentos



**Florencia Pierre**  
aka "Fofa" - Kreyòl Audio

Born in La Gonâve, Haiti, Florencia Pierre has dedicated her life to teaching the stories, songs, and rhythms that form the foundation of traditional Haitian culture. Ms. Pierre lives in the Twin Cities. She is the Cultural Director of Afoutayi and the founder of the institute de danse JAKA in Haiti. Florencia Pierre is an international artist, an accomplished storyteller, dancer, choreographer, singer, actress, designer, chef, educator, as well as a Manbo (a Priestess in the Vodou religion). Ms. Pierre has been featured in "Walking on Fire: Haitian Women's Stories of Survival and Resistance" by Beverly Bell and Edwidge Danticat and was also featured in the first movie produced in Haiti titled "Anita".



**Hassen Taylor M. Ortega aka "HTO"** - English Audio

Relocated to the United States since 2009, and currently living in the Twin Cities, Hassen Taylor Ortega is a native of Haiti with Venezuelan her-itage. He is a talented actor, storyteller, model, dancer, musician and athlete. Hassen started performing at the age of one in Haiti with the JAKA institute of dance, then conquered the U.S artistic venues with his unique artistry and humor. As the youngest member of Afoutayi, Hassen has been performing all across the United States for the past ten years. Hassen's goal is to share his Haitian cultural heritage with you and your children, and hopefully inspire you all, as he is inspired!



**Jude Vales - Español Audio**

Jude Vales is an educator, storyteller and podcaster. He lives in the Twin Cities where he teaches and works as a school administrator. This Haitian-born art lover believes in the transformative power of education and the arts to inspire and empower people of all ages and ethnic backgrounds to become agents for change and makers of a better world.



**Djenane Saint Juste - Français Audio**

Storyteller, writer, actress, model, professional dancer, choreographer and educator, Djenane Saint Juste is a native of Haiti who currently lives in the Twin Cities. Ms. Saint Juste has dedicated herself to the research, development and promotion of traditional Haitian dance, music and storytelling. Djenane's goal is to inspire people of all ages to celebrate Haitian cultural arts as a better way of communication among communities and as a form of respect and recognition for our ancestors and history.

**Audio Recording Credits:**

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Audio Production and Technical Direction by Eric Romani.

CD reproduction : Jeff L. Pierre



**Storytelling**

**Kreyòl:** Florencia Pierre

**English:** Hassen Taylor M. Ortega

**Français:** Djenane Saint Juste

**Español:** Jude Vales



**Song**

**Lead singer:** Florencia Pierre

**Lead drummer:** Eberle Fort

**Kata:** Eric Coursen

**Trumpet:** Arthur Murray

**Chorus:** Florencia Pierre, Eberle Fort, Laura Thelander,  
Arthur Murray, Pierre Richard Murray and Richenard  
Murray.