

Folktales from Dédomè
Gathered and Translated by Sophia Hounton

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Table of Contents

<u>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>THE STORYTELLERS</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>LITTLE TOOTH, OR THE CAPRICIOUS CHILD.....</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>YOGBO THE GLUTTON</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>KOSSI, THE BOY KING.....</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>THE YOUNGEST TRIPLET AND THE SHREW</u>	<u>14</u>
<u>GBOSSANOUKOUIN AND THE SACRED WORD</u>	<u>17</u>
<u>THE PARTRIDGE, THE ANT, AND THE VIPER.....</u>	<u>19</u>
<u>THE SHADOW MARKET</u>	<u>21</u>
<u>YOGBO THE GLUTTON AND THE TRICK WATERS.....</u>	<u>23</u>
<u>THE LION AND THE FLY.....</u>	<u>24</u>
<u>THE CHICKEN AND THE COW</u>	<u>25</u>
<u>THE CHAIN OF FEAR IN THE FIELD OF AGBON</u>	<u>26</u>
<u>THE PALM TREE CHILD</u>	<u>27</u>
<u>THE HUNTER AND HIS TWO WIVES.....</u>	<u>28</u>
<u>THE LION AND THE AKASSA SELLER.....</u>	<u>29</u>
<u>THE LION AND THE THREE PRINCESSES.....</u>	<u>31</u>
<u>THE HUNTER AND THE SNAKE GOD.....</u>	<u>34</u>
<u>THE FORGOTTEN SON AND THE GOLDEN PAPAYA.....</u>	<u>36</u>

THE SECRET OF THE BIRD TWINS38

THE TWINS, WILL, AND THE LION OF THE FOREST.....40

THE DOGS AND THEIR MASTER.....42

MIMBAMIN AND THE PACT BEFORE BIRTH.....43

TORGBORYÈ AND THE KINGDOM OF WOMEN.....45

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Little Tooth, or The Capricious Child

Once upon a time, in a fertile land where the earth generously offered its harvests to those who cultivated with enthusiasm, there lived a couple of honest, hardworking villagers. The Sky had blessed them with two children: one girl and one boy.

The eldest was named Sarah, a young child of a rare sweetness. The younger, whom everyone called Little Tooth, already had an unusual temperament.

The family made their living by working the fields. They farmed yams, corn, millet, and other grains to meet their daily needs. They also produced palm oil, the fruit of constant labor and a simple but dignified life.

However, the happiness of peaceful days cannot always withstand the whims of fate.

Over the years, the father was struck by a cruel illness that slowly weakened his body. Sensing his end was near, he called Sarah to his bedside and, in a voice already overshadowed by death, spoke to her these solemn words: “Take care of your little brother and make sure my absence never brings him to tears.”

Having barely spoken these words, he took his last breath. From then on, the mother raised her two children alone. With infinite tenderness, she met their needs and surrounded them with all the affection her heart could offer. But destiny, inexorable, called her back, leaving Sarah and Little Tooth alone in the world. Thus began the days of hardship for the two orphans.

Faithful to the promise she made to her father, Sarah devoted herself completely to her little brother. She watched over him with admirable patience and tried to satisfy even the smallest of his desires, so that no tear would fall from her face. But Little Tooth was a child with a whimsical and profoundly capricious nature. Every day, he would demand food, a game, or a new fantasy. His sister, out of love as much as out of duty, fulfilled all his wishes.

One day, the child expressed his desire to burn the granaries where they stored their corn and millet.

Sarah tried to dissuade him, saying, “If you do that, we’ll starve.”

When she refused, Little Tooth burst into tears. Unable to bear his crying, she agreed. Thus, the child set fire to the granaries, and all the house’s reserves were reduced to ashes.

A little bit later, Little Tooth said he wanted to eat bean fritters. Sarah, always eager to please him, hurried to make them. She immediately began preparing them. The fritters were already sizzling in the hot oil when Little Tooth declared he wanted to throw sand on them. Sarah firmly objected. As was his habit, he began to cry. Unable to bear the sight of his tears, she was forced to let him do it. The sand mixed with the oil, and the fritters were unsalvageable.

And so, by the whims of Little Tooth, the house sank little by little into poverty.

Hunger took root, and the two children often went to bed with empty stomachs. Unable to endure such misery, Sarah put her little brother on her back and set out into the unknown. They walked for long days and nights, through paths, bushes, mountains, and valleys, until they reached a faraway kingdom.

The king was moved by their distress and showed them hospitality. He brought them into the palace as if they were his own children. However, Little Tooth couldn't change his nature.

One day, while one of the young princes was playing, he said to his sister, "I want to put my fingers in his eyes."

Exhausted, Sarah replied wearily, "Do as you wish."

Immediately, Little Tooth violently plunged his fingers into the young prince's left eye, blinding him.

Sarah, struck with fear, immediately realized they could no longer stay there. Seizing a moment when the guards weren't paying attention, she fled the palace with her little brother.

When the king returned from a long expedition and learned of the misfortune that had befallen his son, he was filled with rage. He sent his guards to chase the fugitives, but they had already fled far away. While wandering, a majestic eagle agreed to carry them beneath his wings to distant lands.

Before taking flight, the bird expressly told them not to touch his tail. But Little Tooth, true to himself, disobeyed and pulled on the eagle's tail feathers. Irritated, the bird dropped them in the middle of nowhere. Despite this challenge, Sarah and her brother continued on their way until they found refuge in an old woman's home, which she generously offered them. However, the land lived under the terror of a fearsome dragon that kept the inhabitants from resting.

One night, Little Tooth announced that he would sleep outside under the moonlight. The old woman and Sarah were terrified and begged him to change his

mind, but the child remained steadfast. That night, against all odds, he confronted the dragon and defeated it. At dawn, the news spread throughout the land, filling the people with immense joy.

The king immediately summoned Little Tooth to the palace. Dazzled by his courage, the king granted him great honors and, in time, named him the heir to the throne. He whose whims had caused so much misfortune became, by a mysterious twist of fate, the savior of an entire kingdom.

Since that day, the elders have said, “Sometimes destiny likes to reward those whose faults seemed to condemn them to ruin.”

Yogbo¹ the Glutton

A long time ago, in a vast kingdom led by a powerful and respected king, whose wisdom equaled his power, lived a man named Yogbo. Yogbo's gluttony and trickery were known by all.

One day, he presented himself before the king and, bowing with almost insolent confidence, he said with poise, "Your majesty, deign to give me two cowries, and I will bring you back men."

The king, surprised by such a declaration, considered him a moment before responding, "How could such a thing be possible?"

But his curiosity piqued, he gave Yogbo two cowries anyway, which in olden times was a precious form of money. Yogbo immediately left the palace and took to the kingdom's roads.

On his route, he met a fish seller. With a deceptive calm, he gave her the two cowries, then, when the seller was distracted, grabbed his fish and fled.

The woman, outraged, yelled, "Come back and take your cowries and give me back my fish!"

But Yogbo, unbothered, continued his route without the smallest regard for her shouts.

Continuing on his way, he later crossed paths with a peanut seller. Feigning courtesy, he gave her the fish he had just stolen, then grabbed her peanuts with a troubling speed before fleeing.

The poor woman, too, began to yell with all her might, "Come back and take your fish and bring me back my peanuts!"

But Yogbo was already far away, unable to hear her cries.

Continuing his journey, he came to a field where a farmer was bent over, weeding his land under the sun. Seeing the peanuts that Yogbo had, the man, gripped by hunger, grabbed them immediately. Without a moment's hesitation, Yogbo snatched the farmer's hoe and fled again.

Later, he glimpsed a man perched in a palm tree, gathering palm nuts. Yogbo stopped at the foot of the tree and handed him the hoe.

"Take this hoe; it'll help you with your task," said Yogbo.

The man used the hoe to knock down a large bunch of palm nuts. Immediately, Yogbo snatched them and ran off.

¹ Trickster figure in Fon folktales.

Then, from the top of the palm tree, the man cried, “Bring back my nuts and take your hoe!”

But Yogbo kept running without even looking back.

Along the way, he met grave diggers who were digging a grave for a dead man. He offered them a couple of palm nuts, and when they were distracted, he grabbed the lifeless body and fled with it.

Later, night began to fall. Yogbo arrived at the home of men who generously took him in. He placed the body in a room and explained to them, “It’s a drunk man I carried here. Let him sleep.”

His hosts served him food and drink with kindness. After a moment, they said to him, “Wouldn’t it be a good idea to wake your companion as well so he can share your meal?”

Yogbo responded with an assured tone, “If he doesn’t wake up, hit him a little bit. He’ll eventually open his eyes.”

The men, believing they were only dealing with a deeply drowsy drunkard, entered the room and tried to wake him. As the body remained unmoving, they shook him, then beat him, unaware he was already dead.

It was then that Yogbo entered the room abruptly and exclaimed with artfully feigned indignation, “You evil men! What have you done? You have just taken a man’s life! I demand that one of you replace him and follow me to the palace.”

A violent altercation followed. But Yogbo, playing into their fear, threatened them, “If you refuse, I will take the issue up to the king, and you will answer for this crime before his court.”

The men, terrified at the idea of being taken before the king, agreed to let one of them go. Thus, Yogbo returned to the palace in the company of a man.

Bowing before the king, he declared with pride, “Your majesty, here is the man that I obtained thanks to the two cowries you gave me.” The king remained silent awhile, in a mix of astonishment and admiration before such trickery.

Intelligence without virtue is only a trick which results in the dishonor of he who boasts it.

Kossi, the Boy King

Once upon a time, in a modest village, a young boy lived with his parents.

At birth, he received the name Kossi. However, upon reaching an age of reason, he categorically rejected this name. He stubbornly refused to respond when called that way. He had given himself a name that he thought to be more aligned with his self-esteem: N'tounnouhouaxosu, meaning "I am smarter than the king." It was under this name that he demanded to be henceforth known.

This name, first limited to only the limits of the village, gained little by little a certain reputation, until it reached the ears of the king. Intrigued and a little offended, the king ordered that the young boy be brought to the palace.

"What is your name?" asked the monarch.

"My name is N'tounnouhouaxosu," he responded with confidence, "which means 'I am smarter than the king'."

His dignity wounded, the king decided to give him a test to prove his supposed genius. He gave him a sheep and ordered him to raise it so that it would produce offspring to be shared between them.

But the king understood such a test was impossible. His hidden intent was to force the young boy to fail, to punish him by death.

The young boy accepted the task and returned to his home. For a long while, he meditated on this absurd mission without finding any solution.

One day, an idea began to grow in his head. He decided to cut down the tree under which the king liked to rest.

At dawn, armed with an axe, he got to work. Passersby tried to dissuade him, reminding him of the formidable anger of the king, but he remained unchanged.

Learning of this plan, the king went to the tree and called out, "Young man, why do you want to cut down this tree?"

"Your majesty," the boy replied seriously. "My father is pregnant and nearing the end of his pregnancy. I'm looking for wood to prepare the necessary bundles for the birthing ceremony."

The king burst into mocking laughter.

"Have you ever seen a man conceive and give birth?"

"Exactly, your majesty," the young boy replied with finesse. "So, you admit that a sheep cannot breed alone. Then why have you entrusted one to me in the hope of offspring?"

Thus, the king understood the implications of the trick. The young boy had turned the king's own reasoning against him, intelligently refuting his absurdity. Humiliated, without acknowledging his defeat, but deeply impressed, the king decided to give him a new test.

The king gave him three empty calabashes and tasked him with bringing them back full within a certain timeframe. The king did not explain what they were to be filled with, stating only that they should be filled with what the King would have wanted, without ever explicitly stating what that was.

The young man left, worried and confused. Time passed, and no solution presented itself. Overwhelmed, he went into the brush and slaughtered several birds. He gathered their feathers to make a disguise. Clad in this disguise, he rose into the air and came to rest on the top of the palace like an unknown species of bird.

The entire royal court was stunned. The king himself went outside to contemplate this mysterious bird. In the middle of the crowd, the young boy's mother exclaimed, "Your majesty, if my son had not left on his quest, he'd no doubt be able to find the name of this bird. Such is his spirit, so insightful."

"Your son, you say? He to whom I gave three calabashes to fill--one with porcelain, the other with clay, and the last with gold--who never returned? There is your so-called genius!"

In saying this, he was unaware that he had just revealed the answer to the test.

From the top of the palace, the young boy, concealed in his disguise, heard these words. He immediately flew away and disappeared.

He then filled the three calabashes in accordance with the instructions accidentally given by the king: one with porcelain, the other with clay, and the last with gold.

At the appointed time, he returned to the palace and presented the filled calabashes.

The king, stupefied, remained stunned for a moment. Initially convinced of his triumph, he had already prepared to execute the young man. But he had once again brilliantly succeeded. Defeated by the evidence, the king abandoned his pride. He put the young man on his throne in his place as king, granting him all the honors and authority reserved for royalty.

By his intelligence and his trickery, N'tounnouhouaxosu rose to the level of a king.

Since this day, the elders say, “True intelligence does not dwell in pride or provocation but in one’s capacity to observe, reflect, and transform trials into opportunities. He who seeks to humiliate another will become a prisoner of their own trick, while the quick and insightful mind triumphs without violence, by the force of reason alone.”

The Youngest Triplet and the Shrew

My tale soars and soars over plains and forests, crossing villages and kingdoms, before landing on the singular story of three children born under the same star, in destiny's same breath: triplets.

Amongst them, the third to see the light of day was distinguished, from a young age, by a mysterious aura. The elders said that the signs of his greatness were written on his forehead before his birth. While growing up, he became a great Fa priest. As much feared as he was respected, he was a keeper of invisible secrets that the average mortal couldn't fathom. He knew the silent language of plants, how to discern in each leaf, each piece of bark, each root, the hidden truth that the spirits had put there. With his knowledge, he cured illnesses, relieved sufferings, and gave hope to grieving families. His name spread from land to land, and crowds of people came to him with their ills, their sorrows, and their prayers.

One day, while the three brothers stood together in the shade of a great tree, talking about things of this earth and things of the other side, someone appeared that disrupted their calm. Emerging before them was a woman of such dazzling beauty that she appeared to be fashioned by the fire of the sun and by the softness of the moon. Her face glowed with an almost supernatural light; her eyes, as deep as ancient waters, seemed to hold unfathomable secrets.

In a voice both sweet and authoritative, she said these words: "He amongst you who knows how to dance, how to pass between my feet, and how to move my soul, will become my husband."

At these words, she sat down with grandeur, splaying out her long and graceful limbs before her, like she was presiding over a test given by destiny.

The eldest of the triplets came forth confidently. He began to dance with vigor, then passed through the feet of the mysterious woman. But her heart remained stone; no emotion was moved within her.

The second eldest, refusing to be left behind, took his turn. His dance was soft, lively, and harmonious. However, it left the woman indifferent.

Finally, the last brother, the great Fa priest, rose in an almost sacred silence. He didn't only dance with the grace of his body, but with the depth of his soul. Each of his movements seemed to move to a rhythm only the spirits could hear. He approached slowly, then bowed at her feet with nobility tinged with mystery. The woman, who also possessed supernatural powers, felt a strange force that birthed a

secret communion between their souls. Convinced that destiny had brought them together, she agreed to become his wife.

The great priest lived in a home where nothing was left to chance. His room was surrounded by forty-one small sacred statues, silent guardians filled with protective forces. They were arranged with a ritual precision, each representing an invisible power that watched over his life.

In the room where they stored their water stood a large clay pot containing a sacred potion. Inside the potion lay a protective fetish. Before every trip or important decision, the priest consulted this sacred object. If the fetish clouded the potion or seemed to reject its contents, this was a warning of danger. But if the water sprang forth clear and transparent, the path would be favorable.

However, beneath the guise of a perfect wife, the woman concealed a dark nature. Each night, as sleep draped her veil over the house, she revealed her true essence. While the priest slept, she spat invisible fire into his hair, hoping to consume his life force. But the forty-one statues, ever-vigilant guardians, used their powers to stifle the evil woman's assaults.

Irritated that her plans were constantly thwarted, she decided to try an even more formidable trick.

One morning, feigning sweetness and care, she asked to accompany her husband into the bush to gather leaves for preparing akassa². The priest, in his kindness and his duty as a protective husband, accepted, without suspecting the trap set for him, even though he took care to bring some of his powers with him.

They had barely entered the thick brush when the woman transformed. Her face hardened, her eyes flashed with a terrifying light, and she rushed at him with a frightening violence. She continued to transform, first into a venomous insect, then a snake with deadly fangs, then into a ferocious, blood-thirsty beast.

The great priest fought her fury with the power of his incantations. His voice rose in the air, serious and solemn, invoking the ancestral forces. The fight between the two powers was terribly intense. The Earth itself seemed to tremble under the violence of their combat.

But as the fight dragged on, the priest's strength waned, and his powers weakened. The woman was gaining ground.

² A medium sized ball of gelatinous dough made from water and corn flour, traditionally sold wrapped in leaves. A base most often eaten with various soups and meats.

It was then that, silently in his home, the protective fetish sensed the peril that was threatening its master. Immediately, he brought the forty-one sacred statues to life. They took off, carried by invisible winds, across the bush.

They appeared around the priest like an army of the spirit world. Together, they confronted the woman with dark powers and, after a fierce battle, defeated her.

Thus, the great Fa priest was saved from certain death. Without the wisdom of his mystical protections and the loyalty of his sacred guardians, he would have perished under the assault of this deceitful wife.

The moral lesson: Wisdom dictates that one should never trust appearances alone, as those whose eyes shine can sometimes hide the most sinister of shadows.

Gbossanoukouin and the Sacred Word

A long time ago, Gbossanoukouin wandered through lands, carrying a modest straw hut, as if his very existence refused to settle down.

One day, seized by an inner resolve, he devised a plan to build a stable home and thereby establish his permanent residence. He went into the heart of the bush, chose a spot, and set out to clear it methodically and with perseverance.

He began to clear the brush from his chosen place. He worked until night fell, then, as he often did, left carrying his little house to sleep elsewhere.

The following day, when he returned to continue his work, he was shocked. The whole plot had been completely cleared as if an invisible hand had overtaken his work. There was no trace of humans.

“Who is working in the shadows by my side?” he asked, troubled.

The following day, he began to uproot the shrubs. But when he returned, he noticed that they had all been uprooted. Shocked, he remained perplexed.

He decided to look for wood to construct the house. The following day, he found a sufficient quantity of wood, carefully arranged. He went to look for straw; when he returned, he found, in turn, all the materials needed for the roof.

Each day, it was the same phenomenon without him ever seeing another person.

One day, he dug the foundations and planted the first pole. When he came back later, he discovered, stupefied, that the house had been completely finished, with doors and windows perfectly installed.

Troubled by this mystery, he decided to consult the Fa³ for answers about this phenomenon that defied the world's ordinary laws. The Fa revealed to him that hostile forces envied his life. Before living in this house, he had to perform a protection ritual.

Gbossanoukouin performed the ritual with care, following all the Bokonon's⁴ instructions. When the ritual was finished, the priest declared to him:

“Those who helped you from the spirit world will reveal themselves to you. But take heed: each time you want to see them, you must recite this incantation:

³ A divinatory system and means of communication with the spiritual world in Nigeria, Benin, Togo, and Ghana. An oracle that provides guidance and often prescribes certain rituals and sacrifices. Also called *Ifa*.

⁴ A Vodun priest, a conduit of the Fa that interprets signs and messages from the Fa received in ceremony and shares them with the inquiring party.

‘Nothing escapes extraordinary eye; everything he sees belongs to him. I want to see you.’ But know this: each time you pronounce these words, an enemy’s life will be lost.”

Gbossanoukouin entered his new home. A bit later, a panther and a lion came before him. He welcomed them in. Touched by his hospitality, they refused to leave and decided to live with him. Together, they shared the fruits of their hunts.

But one day, the lion and the panther demanded that the man go alone to hunt and bring back game. They stayed at the house while he left.

Every time he recited the sacred incantation, a prey fell mysteriously in the brush. He returned each day with full hands. This intrigued his companions greatly. One day, they decided to secretly follow him. Thus, they discovered that when he recited the incantation, the animals collapsed as if struck by some invisible force.

Upon their return home, the panther and the lion conferred with one another. Confused and envious, they decided to turn against the man. But when they prepared to attack him, Gbossanoukouin recited the sacred incantation again. The lion and the panther fell immediately, struck down by the power of the words.

For a long time, Gbossanoukouin lived alone in the heavy silence of the bush.

The Partridge, the Ant, and the Viper

Once upon a time, there was a partridge that lived peacefully at the heart of the savannah. She had just laid precious eggs, promises of life and of the future that she tenderly incubated, waiting for the day they would hatch. But one morning, gripped by hunger, she decided to momentarily leave her nest to find something to eat. Worried, she hurried, hoping to return before danger could roam.

She returned to a terrible scene: a viper had slid into her nest and had wrapped itself around her eggs, ready to defend its new treasure. The partridge knew immediately that her life was in danger. Between her eggs and her own survival, the choice was cruel. Terrified, she fled.

On her path, she met Awasagbé, the squirrel. In a trembling voice, she sang her distress:

*Agbé é, wa yi kpɔn azin lɔ,
A tɔ é vi agbé wa yi kpɔn azé lɔ,
Azin cé oun dodo ganji
Bɔ núxanú gɔndɔn wa yi ci azin ji,
Nyɛn vɛ sin azin nǎ kpɔn nú mi wɛ dé sin,
Nú nyɔn nú akɔdé, akɔ nɔ biɔ,
Nyɔnnú xógo asútɔn wɛ nyi vodun,
E nyɔn nú wé, é nyɔn nú wé, asú é Vodun,
E nyɔn nú hwi lɔ,
Séségli, séségli.*

Moved by her song, the squirrel agreed to accompany her. But when he glimpsed the viper, unmoving and threatening on the eggs, he was seized by fear. Without looking back, he fled, abandoning the partridge to her dismay.

With a heavy heart, the partridge continued on her way. She then met the palm rat, with whom she shared her misfortune. He agreed to help her, but when he saw the viper, he too was seized by panic and fled.

Thus, the partridge roamed, going from animal to animal, but found nothing but deception and abandonment. Her hope dwindled, and her despair grew.

Finally, they crossed paths with an ant. Small and inconspicuous, she listened attentively to the partridge's story. Without hesitation, she promised to help. Very quickly, she gathered the other ants. In a disciplined army, they set off towards the

nest. When they arrived, they invaded the viper, sliding over her body, biting relentlessly. Unable to stand such an unending attack, the viper gave up. She hastily unraveled and fled, leaving the eggs behind.

The partridge, moved and grateful, took back her nest. A couple of days later, the eggs hatched, bringing to life many little partridges.

Since that day, the elders have said, “Never underestimate those who are small. Where the strong hesitate or flee, the humble, united, and determined succeed. It is not size that makes strength, but courage and the union of hearts.”

The Shadow Market

My tale flies and flies and falls on an orphan. His dead father was a fisherman who would bring back fish to sell at the market, while his mother was only a modest vendor.

In these olden times, there was one market that was called “Ku-xi”, the market of the dead. It was said that the spirits frequented this market, invisible to the living, yet their presence was revealed by the strange activity in the stalls, as if life and the afterlife discreetly crossed paths.

The orphan had made a habit of going there. Without anyone noticing, he would sneak pieces of meat to bring back home to enjoy. At each of his trips, he raised the curiosity of Torgboryè, who wondered where these meats were coming from.

One day, unable to stand it any longer, Torgboryè called out to him, “Young orphan, where do you find the meat that you bring back? I would like to accompany you to learn your secret.”

The orphan accepted. Together, they went to the market and hid in the foliage of a great tree nearby, waiting for the right moment.

At the Ku-xi market, the spirits came to trade before the market’s master, leader of the underworld, closed the activities. Once the market had closed, each spirit disappeared, abandoning their goods until the next market.

The two companions waited in silence, observing the strange scene. When Torgboryè glimpsed the spirit master, named Atagban, he murmured his name with insistence. But the orphan, worried, told him to stop, fearing he might attract misfortune.

When the spirits had left the market, leaving behind the meat and goods, the orphan and Torgboryè emerged from their hiding place. They helped themselves to large portions of meat.

However, Torgboryè, greedy and driven by envy, glimpsed a large calabash full of riches. Wanting to grab it, he found his hands, then his feet, stuck to the object. He became immobile, incapable of even the slightest movement.

After the spirits' departure, ferocious beasts would roam the market to feast on abandoned leftovers. That day, a lion approached and saw Torgboryè stuck to the calabash. Taking pity upon him, he came to help Torgboryè. However, the lion, too, was seduced by the same invisible force and became stuck to the calabash. The two of them remained captives. In his despair, Torgboryè made a wish to the calabash:

“Let me leave and keep the lion in my place!”

He repeated these words multiple times in a persistent plea. Finally, he was able to free himself. Seized by fear, he fled and took shelter in the lion's den, where he found the lion's killed prey. Starving, he ate the meat without restraint.

During this, the lion, too, had narrowly escaped and returned to his den. He was surprised to find Torgboryè inside. Mad with rage, he prepared to devour him, but Torgboryè, trembling, begged, "Spare me. Let me climb this tree. I will throw myself from the treetop and die; then you can eat me easily."

The lion, tricked by these words, agreed. Torgboryè climbed the tree and, reaching the top, called for help with all his strength. His cries reached passing hunters. They rushed over immediately and, seeing the menacing lion, shot him down without hesitation.

And so, concludes this strange adventure born of the Shadow Market.

Lesson: Greed and reckless curiosity often lead man to his downfall.

Yogbo the Glutton and the Trick Waters

My tale rises over the savannah, passing over the lands of savage beasts, brushing the treetops, and lands on Yogbo the glutton.

Yogbo was insatiable. He was never full, as if hunger had taken up permanent residence in him.

One day, under the shade of a large tree, he glimpsed a vulture eating palm nuts. The bird dropped pieces of the nuts, which Yogbo eagerly devoured. Seduced by such abundance, he grew bold and asked the vulture to take him to find these palm trees that were so full of fruit. The vulture observed him and responded calmly, “Yogbo, you don’t have wings like me. Without them, it’s impossible for me to take you there.”

Disappointed but refusing to give up, Yogbo returned to his home and consulted the Fa. Thanks to the advice he received, he gained magic wings that allowed him to soar through the air.

A few days later, he found the vulture, and together they reached the palm grove. Yogbo carried a large bag in which he stocked the palm nuts from the trees. He jumped from branch to branch, driven by his insatiable greed. When his bag was full, the vulture advised him to turn back. But Yogbo, taken by greed, continued his mission to collect fruits. It was then that he lost one of his wings.

Unbalanced, he dropped his bag and fell into a nearby lake full of crocodiles. By a clever trick, Yogbo nevertheless managed to escape from peril. He spoke to the mother of the crocodiles and made her believe he was a part of a circumcision ritual for her children. He asked her to gather her children in a hut beneath the lake, while demanding that he be provided with an abundance of food during the operation. The mother crocodile agreed.

But in this hut, Yogbo did not perform the discussed ritual. He outwitted the family and devoured the baby crocodiles over several days. His crime accomplished, he left, closing the hut behind him, then asked the mother crocodile to bring him to shore, telling her to open the hut three days later after their pretend recovery period.

The mother crocodile accompanied him to shore. But when she returned to open the hut, she discovered the horrifying truth. Her children were all devoured.

Furious, she chased Yogbo and found him perched on a tree. She tried in vain to reach him but couldn’t climb. In her rage, her cries caught the attention of nearby fishermen who intervened and ended the threat she represented.

So ends the story of Yogbo the glutton: a being whose tricks were great, but whose greed eventually led him to the brink of peril.

The Lion and the Fly

A long time ago, in the era where man and animals still lived together under the same law, a wise and respected king reigned. His kingdom was vast, peaceful, and no one dared disrupt the order that he had established.

One day, while the king rested peacefully in his hammock in the shade of a large tree, a violent fight broke out between the lion, the king of the animals, and a simple fly. The fly, in a bold voice, called out to the lion, "I can kill you."

The lion let out a dismissive laugh, "You? Kill me? Little creature without strength, you only stir pity in me."

His pride stung, the fly instated. The fight became so heated that the issue was brought before the king. After having listened to the two adversaries, the king declared, "Since each of you thinks you are right, I challenge you. May the stronger win."

At these words, the fight began. The fly, sly, circled the lion for a moment, then, making use of his inattention, suddenly plunged into his nostrils.

The lion, immediately panicking, struggled violently. He roared, shook his head, rolled on the ground, then began running in all directions to chase out the intruder tormenting him.

In his fury, he threw himself into the trunks of the trees, hoping that the shock would get the fly out. But the fly remained in his nose, annoying him relentlessly. Exhausted by his efforts, wounded by the hits he had inflicted on himself, the lion succumbed to his injuries.

The little fly prevailed over the powerful lion. Brute force is nothing without intelligence; sometimes the smallest creatures triumph over the greatest through cunning and perseverance.

The Chicken and the Cow

Once upon a time, there was a rich and prosperous king whose kingdom was overflowing with fertile lands and abundant animals.

Amongst these animals there lived a hen and a hardy cow, both known for their usefulness and their strong character.

One day, a fight broke out between them. The chicken, lively and proud, claimed she could trample cow dung and spread it with ease. The cow, pride-stung, retorted with disdain that he would never stoop to handling the insignificant droppings of a simple chicken. The commotion grew louder, interrupting the quiet of the kingdom.

Upon hearing of the disturbance, the king called forth the two animals. After listening to them, he decided to settle their dispute by organizing a public competition. He called all the people of the kingdom to aid in the competition that would declare a winner between the two.

The day came, and an immense crowd gathered in the large court. The cow was called first. Under the watchful eyes of the crowd, he left behind large piles of excrement. The chicken then advanced without hesitation and, with surprising ease, began to scratch them and spread them across the dirt, as she had claimed.

Then came the chicken's turn. She, in turn, relieved herself, mixing her excrement with her urine. The king then turned to the cow and asked him to do the same, spreading what the chicken had left behind.

The cow stepped forward, but the harsh, penetrating smell overtook him. Despite it all, he tried to complete the test, yet his growing disgust slowed his movements. Wanting to insist, he slipped, lost his balance, and fell heavily. His fall was fatal.

Thus, the chicken won the test, the crowd looking on in shock.

Since that day, the elders have taught that it is not sufficient to look down on those who seem small or insignificant to feel superior. Pride often blinds oneself, and one must know one's own limits before challenging the limits of others.

The Chain of Fear in the Field of Agbon

Once upon a time, Agbon the farmer asked the lizard, the chicken, a falcon, and a hunter to work his fields.

The first to arrive was the lizard. Despite his small size, he got to work with remarkable eagerness, turning over the ground with a shocking diligence. While he worked, he glimpsed the chicken approaching the field in turn. Fearful of the idea of being pecked, the lizard hastily abandoned his work and went to hide in the freshly dug furrows.

Later, the chicken entered the field and began working the dirt with great energy. But while she busied herself, she glimpsed from afar the falcon arriving to begin his task. Frightened at the idea of being devoured, she too fled and hid.

The falcon arrived at the field and began to work enthusiastically. His hoe dug furrows while the lizard and chicken hid, watching out for the smallest sign of danger.

However, the falcon soon glimpsed the hunter's arrival, his gun slung on its strap over his shoulder. Full of panic, he quickly left his work, fled, and hid. While fleeing, he passed near the hiding spot of the lizard, who, sensing his presence, leaped out and began to run. This unexpected flight scared the chicken, who began to run as well, followed by the lizard and the falcon, who joined the chase.

And so, the three animals found themselves in a frantic race, each both hunter and prey under the impassive gaze of the hunter, who calmly observed them, his gun still on his shoulder.

Agbon, returning to the field to observe their progress, discovered such mayhem and laughed at the comedic scene of fear and chase.

Eventually, the lizard was unable to escape the chicken, and the chicken was unable to escape the falcon, and the falcon succumbed to the hunter's fire.

The Palm Tree Child

Once upon a time, there was a barren old woman, a woman whose destiny had never given her the opportunity to know the joy and the glory of motherhood.

One day, she went to the palm grove to pick ripe palm nuts. While she busied herself with the task, she made a silent wish to the palm tree. She wished with all her heart that one of its fruits could transform into a child that she would adopt and give infinite motherly love. That would be, she thought, the greatest joy of her existence.

The palm tree seemed to hear her prayer and grant her wish. Before her own eyes, one of the nuts transformed into a child. The old woman, overwhelmed with joy, took him tenderly in her arms and brought him home.

When she arrived at the village, a farmer, seeing the child, asked the old woman to prepare the child so that he could help him cultivate. The old woman accepted and gave the child to the farmer to accompany him in his field.

However, in the middle of the day, as the sun's rays burned the earth, the child began to melt little by little until he was entirely transformed into red palm oil in the middle of the field.

A parrot, witnessing this mysterious scene, flew to a tree branch and landed. There he began to sing to the old woman.

*Nyɔnxónɔ, Nyɔnxónɔ,
O vi tɔ wɛ zún amivɛ lété
Aloɛ mǎ mɔn go vi dé nǎ ba dé mɛn
E da fɔ mɛn crú
Bo tɔ afɔmɛn wliwa*

Hearing the bird's song, the old woman was deeply intrigued. The parrot sang his song a second time. Filled with a terrible feeling and left speechless, the old woman began to run to the farmer's field.

When she arrived, she discovered with horror that her child had melted into red palm oil and that the farmer was eating yam covered in the red oil in the middle of the field.

The old woman immediately asked for her child. But the farmer responded in a detached tone that the child had disappeared in the field.

Her heart broken, the old woman turned back and went home, inconsolable.

Since that day, the elders teach youth that we must carefully cherish the blessings life gives us. The child that is received as a blessing must be cared for as a treasure, as the burning sun of negligence consumes even miracles.

The Hunter and his Two Wives

My tale flies and flies and falls on a formidable hunter.

He had two wives. The first had children and the second had none. The hunter possessed remarkable skill. Untiring, he never returned from the hunt empty-handed. His game sack was always full, and he often brought back big catches that he sold at market. His fame went beyond the borders of the village, so excellent a hunter was he.

Over time, the hunter took special affection for his second wife, to the point where he preferred her over the first. It was she he entrusted his meat to be sold at the market. Little by little, all his admiration and confidence were given to this woman, to the detriment of the first wife. His attachment to her surpassed that for the first wife.

Days passed, many moons went by, and the seasons took their course. One day, sensing his death approaching, the hunter called his second wife to him. Before his last breath, he passed on to her all his powers, teaching her the secret techniques of the hunt as well as the mysteries buried deep in the forest.

But the second wife, who had been nursing jealousy for the first for a while because of her fertility, held a deep resentment for her.

After the death of the hunter, she took her gun and sank into the forest. Using the occult knowledge that had been gifted to her, she mysteriously called forth the spirit of the eldest son of the first wife. She transformed his spirit into an animal and slaughtered it.

At that very instant, in the family home, the young man fell and suddenly died, plunging his mother into inconsolable grief.

The second wife brought the meat home while the first wife, overwhelmed with sorrow, cried for the loss of her son.

But when she tried to sell the meat at the market, as she normally did, no one would buy it. Everyone who neared it felt inexplicable fear and left. A strange repulsion seemed to grab the buyers from a distance.

This tale teaches us that when a man shares his life with multiple wives, it is for him to preserve the equality and harmony between them. He must take care not to sow preference and division, as jealousy born in an aching heart can bring about the greatest misfortunes. Jealousy fed by injustice always gives birth to drama.

The Lion and the Akassa Seller

Once upon a time, there was a woman who lived peacefully with her three daughters, all of whom were strikingly beautiful and as graceful as they were pretty.

This woman made her living by selling akassa, which she prepared every night with her children. Thus, at the end of the day, mother and daughters gathered in the foyer to complete this daily task.

One night, while they were preparing akassa, a lion, a fearsome beast from the heart of the bush, transformed into a man and came to their home.

In this deceptive guise, he approached the woman with flattery. He kept praising her beauty and, feigning respectful affection, called her “mother-in-law,” alluding to her three daughters, whose beauty had caught his eye.

However, behind this outward courtesy lay disastrous intentions. While the woman and her daughters wrapped the akassa in large leaves, the stranger watched them with a troubling attention, his eyes sweeping over each of the young girls one by one.

When the work was almost finished, the mother noticed that only a small amount of akassa remained in the pot. She ordered her daughters to put away the utensils in the house and not come out again. The young girls obeyed without delay.

The mother had sensed that this man was no ordinary being. There was something in his eyes, in his presence, that betrayed the wild nature he tried to hide. Alone by the fire, she calmly finished her task.

The man transformed again, believing his hour had come; he set about coaxing them. His goal was clear: devour the mother and her three daughters.

But when he realized the children were not returning, he understood that his true identity had been revealed. His face darkened, and he began to issue threats.

The woman, without showing any fear, responded sweetly and cleverly. She soothed him with kind words, pretending to be seduced to buy the time she needed to finish her work. Then, once all her work was done, she waited for the right moment.

The man, crouching near the blazing fire that had been used for cooking, was at her mercy. Then, in a quick and calculated movement, the woman overturned the heavy pot still burning hot on his head. Overcome with pain, the man let out a terrible cry and immediately reverted to his true form, that of a ferocious lion.

The beast struggled violently, roaring with all his might and trying in vain to defend himself. But the burn was too serious. Soon after, he collapsed and let out his last breath.

As he struggled, the woman and her daughters had locked themselves in their home, sheltered from the danger.

Thus, thanks to the prudence and cleverness of a mother, the brutal strength of the lion was defeated.

The Lion and the Three Princesses

My story flies and flies and lands on a revered king who reigned over a vast and prosperous kingdom.

This king had three children; three daughters born the same day, so similar to each other that they were seen as the perfect triplets. Their beauty amazed the whole village. However, no one outside the palace knew their names.

Each morning, as was an established ritual amongst them, the three princesses went to fetch water from the spring, then gathered the fruit that had fallen during the night from a great wild apple tree.

One day, the king proclaimed to the whole kingdom: “The man who can find the exact names of my three daughters will marry all three of them.”

He set a deadline and ordered that the news be shared all the way to the edge of the kingdom. Immediately, the men set to work. They all dreamed of marrying the marvelous king’s daughters.

Among them was the lion, the cleverest of them all. Having learned that the princesses went to the wild apple tree every morning, he devised a scheme. Before dawn, he went to the tree, gathered all the fallen apples, then climbed to the top and hid, waiting for the princesses to arrive.

When the young girls arrived, they were surprised to find not a single fruit on the ground. From his hiding place, the lion deliberately dropped an apple. One of the princesses grabbed it.

“Kpokpoyanwé, I found an apple!” she cried.

The lion carefully memorized the first name. Then he dropped a second apple. Another of the young girls grabbed it.

“Migonouhwilè, I found one too!”

The lion smiled from his hiding place. Finally, he dropped a third apple. The last princess grabbed it in turn.

“Hounbononklorka, I found one myself, too!”

And so, the lion had learned the names of the king’s three daughters: Kpokpoyanwé, Migonouhwilè, and Hounbononklorka.

The princesses were completely unaware of a presence observing them from the treetops and of the fact that the fruits were not falling on their own.

The lion dropped another couple of apples, which the girls gathered with joy before returning to the palace. Satisfied with his work, he climbed down the tree and returned peacefully to his home.

The date set by the king finally arrived. All the men of the kingdom gathered at the palace. Each guessed the princesses’ names, but none was correct.

The lion arrived last, dressed with remarkable elegance: a kepi on his head, shoes on his feet, and a nice shirt. He took his place among the suitors and patiently waited his turn. When the moment finally came for him to speak, he stood.

“Kpokpoyanwé, come take the kepi off my head,” he said confidently.

Immediately, one of the princesses stepped forward and did so. Murmurs of shock erupted in the crowd.

“Migonouhwilè, take off my shoes,” the lion continued.

The second princess came forth and removed them. The entire palace held its breath. Finally, the lion turned to the last princess.

“Houkononklorka, take off my shirt.”

The third princess obeyed.

The entire crowd erupted in applause. The lion had just accomplished the impossible: he knew the exact names of the king's three daughters.

The king, admiring, kept his promise and gave his three daughters to the lion in marriage. The lion left with his three wives, for he lived far in the heart of the forest.

But the other animals, consumed with jealousy to see the lion win where they had failed, decided to ambush him on his way back. Many of them gathered and went to block the path, determined to kill him and his wives. The lion, himself a trickster. Spotted the trap that awaited them from afar. Without losing his composure, he took a bottle and, by a mysterious art, got himself into it with his three wives. Immediately, the bottle began to walk the path on its own. When the animals saw it approach, they were astonished.

“Bottle, where are you going?” they stopped it and asked.

“I’m going into the forest,” the bottle replied.

The animals recoiled in terror. They had never seen a bottle speak, much less sing while walking. Immediately they understood that it couldn’t be an ordinary bottle.

“Surely it’s the lion who is hiding inside!” they cried.

Some wanted to break it immediately. But the panther, more reflective, proposed another option.

“Throw it into water. Then if the lion is inside, he will drown in there.”

Everyone approved of this idea. The panther grabbed the bottle and, gathering all his strength, threw it in the direction of the neighboring spring. But the throw was so powerful that the bottle crossed to the other side of the spring without falling in it. It flew and smashed on the other side of the riverbank.

In a great shattering of glass, the lion and his three wives emerged safe and sound.

Seeing this scene, the other animals were filled with spite and shame. The lion, triumphant, continued walking with his wives, leaving behind himself jealousy and defeat.

Since that day, it is said that trickery often wins where strength fails.

The Hunter and the Snake God

A long time ago in a village far away lived a hunter and his wife. The wife was the only daughter of the king, who had given her in marriage to this valiant man.

In those times, the village had an ancient custom. For rain to fall, a sacrifice had to be made to the snake god. A terrible drought had fallen over the land. The earth cracked, the fields dried out, even the water pots seemed to be dying of thirst. For long months, not a single drop of water fell from the sky. The farmers no longer could work their fields, so merciless was the drought.

Worried for his people, the king went to consult the wisdom of the Fa. After the rites and the invocations, the verdict came. For the rain to return, a female sacrifice had to be made to the snake god. The Fa designated for this sacrifice none other than the only daughter of the king, who had become the hunter's wife.

The moment this decision was announced, the hunter was far from the village, gone on a long hunting expedition.

When her father called, the young woman returned to the palace to be prepared for the sacrifice. According to the ritual, her head was shaved. Then she was taken to a sacred site where the snake god descended from the sky to receive his offering. It was thus that, every time a drought hit the village, a woman was delivered to the celestial snake. He came down from the sky, carried off his victim, and immediately after, abundant rain fell on the earth. The ritual became a feared tradition, respected by all.

When all the ceremonies had finished, the king's daughter was left alone in the sacrificial site, waiting for her tragic end. Sitting in solitude with a broken heart, she sang a lament:

*Mi dɔ nú asú é, gbényǎtɔ ni wa kpɔn mi é,
Ni wa yi mɔn vivɔ nú cé,
Nyɛn di é esɔ nú dǎ é, dǎ wa hwé si sɔ gbé.*

It was a song of distress, a call to her husband, like a prayer carried by the wind.

Far away, deep in the bush, the hunter was still hunting. But guided by a mysterious tie between their souls, he heard the distant voice of his wife. He replied:

*Mi dɔ nú asi é, gbényǎtɔ, ni nɔ té kpɔn mi é,
Oun gbɛ kpodo yo to wé nú,
Mi dɔ nú asi é, gbényǎtɔ, ni nɔ té kpɔn mi é,
Nanyi mɔn vivɔ nú tɔn.*

Immediately, he made his way through the forest, braving the undergrowth and the steep paths, until he reached the sacrificial site. There, he hid and waited patiently.

Soon, the snake god came down from the sky. Large, fearsome, with a serpent body so long you couldn't see the end, he slowly approached the young woman, intending to swallow her.

At the precise moment the monster opened his gaping mouth, the hunter fired a shot. With a single cannon shot, he brought down the snake. Then, in a firm movement, he sliced off its head with the help of his machete, putting it in his hunting bag.

Thus, he had saved his wife. The snake had barely let out his last breath when a torrential downpour began to fall on the village, as if the sky itself commended the hunter's bravery.

The hero brought his wife back to their house. However, a passerby who had discovered the snake's body cut off his tail and hurried to spread the news throughout the village: someone had killed the snake god.

When the king learned of this, he proclaimed before all his people that he who brought to him the snake's head would be showered in riches, would receive the greatest honors, and would share the kingdom with the king. The man who had only the snake's tail hurried to bring it to the palace, hoping to collect the reward. But, unable to prove himself as the snake slayer, he was revealed to be an imposter and was executed.

Soon after, the true hero arrived at the palace, carrying the snake head in his hunting bag. He was accompanied by his wife, the king's daughter that he had saved.

Seeing this, the king was overcome with joy. Full of admiration for the hunter's courage, he showered him in riches, gave him the highest of honors, and shared his kingdom with him.

Since that day, the hunter's name was celebrated from generation to generation as the man who had defeated the snake god and brought the rain to his people.

The Forgotten Son and the Golden Papaya

Once upon a time in a vast kingdom, a king had three sons: Gbehou, Kinmandogbéhou, and Sossin.

Among them, the king showed a special affection for Gbehou, whom he loved much more than his two other sons. He never ceased to show him the extent of his riches, his treasures, his lands, and his goods, so much so that he hid all this from the two other princes.

One day, the king called forth his three sons and told them, “It is time for each of you to leave the kingdom and seek out your own destiny.”

And so, he sent them on an adventure.

However, his preference remained evident; he gave Gbehou stacks of cash and took care to prepare a home for him outside the palace, where he could live in comfort. The young prince thus had no worries; he ate his fill and continued to live in his father’s good graces.

However, Kinmandogbéhou and Sossin were left to their own devices. They both embarked on winding paths, crossed meandering roads, and made their way little by little into the heart of a deep forest. They walked for a long time until their paths diverged, each following their own quest for shelter and survival.

Further in the forest, Sossin was unfortunately attacked by savage beasts who killed and devoured him.

Kinmandogbéhou was the only one left. Alone in the world, he continued his path until he reached a faraway land, where he began a modest life. His life there was difficult. For a living, he often ate the food scraps that the other villagers threw away. While they were peeling papayas, they left behind the skins and the bruised fruit; Kinmandogbéhou gathered what he could and was satisfied.

One day, the villagers threw out a papaya that had already been peeled and no one had touched. Kinmandogbéhou gathered it and brought it home. After having carefully washed it, he prepared to eat it. But when he cut it open, he discovered bits of solid gold inside.

Shocked, he went to show what he had discovered to a respected elder of the land. After having examined the treasure, the old man told him, “My son, what you are holding in your hands are riches.”

The old man brought him to merchants who could estimate its value. The gold was sold for an exorbitant price. From then on, fortune favored Kinmandogbéhou. Soon after, he became incredibly rich. He built luxurious mansions, bought horses of great value, started a large family, and surrounded himself with many servants.

During this time, Gbehou, to whom the king had given so much money, had squandered it unwisely, and he sank deeper and deeper into poverty.

Years passed. One day, the king announced through his messengers to all the kingdom and even far-away lands that he wished to organize a great party. The news also reached Kinmandogbéhou.

When the awaited day arrived, Gbehou arrived at the palace with only two small slices of plantain as an offering to his father.

Kinmandogbéhou, however, who the king thought was never capable of succeeding, returned with an impressive entourage: his wives, his children, his servants, and his subjects, all singing and dancing as they passed. Kinmandogbéhou himself led them proudly on a majestic horse, bringing great riches to the king to support the party's organization: cowries, drinks, precious goods, and many presents.

The king no longer recognized him. So Kinmandogbéhou stepped forward and said respectfully, "Father, I too have heard the news about this great festival. I have come back to attend and bring support for the kingdom."

At these words, the king was speechless. His son that he had ignored and almost abandoned had returned in glory, while the son that he had spoiled was lost.

The king at last understood that one can't measure the value of a child by the favor one gives him, but by his courage and the wisdom with which he constructs his destiny.

This story teaches us that he who disregarded today could become tomorrow the greatest pride of the family.

The Secret of the Bird Twins

My story flies and flies and lands on the border between two powerful kingdoms, feared and respected: that of Azohouè and that of Dodomin.

One day, the king of Azohouè, father of two valiant twins, Zinsou and Sagbo, went to the neighboring kingdom of Dodomin to ask two princesses to marry his sons. He was received with honor and dignity. After long discussions, the king of Dodomin agreed. Thus, the princes Zinsou and Sagbo were allowed to choose their wives from that kingdom.

As the day neared when the two princes would meet their future queens, Zinsou woke at dawn and went to the fields. He worked hard until he was exhausted. While he took a break to quench his thirst, two twin birds with identical plumage had landed in a nearby tree. They began to talk.

“Adjahè!”

“Ayorhè!”

“We have already flown over this land today. Do you remember the time we went to ask for our wives' hands in marriage?”

“Yes... but tell me, what will happen the day when the marriage will be performed?”

“That day, a rainbow will descend from the heavens to devour the beings on earth.”

“Is that really true?”

“Yes, it is certain. But may the listening ear keep this secret, for revealing it could cause great misfortune.”

The birds spoke in parables. Zinsou, alerted, listened attentively to their conversation. Troubled, he thought immediately of the imminent wedding of his brother and himself. He had the notion that these words were destined for him. However, he remained quiet, continued his work, then returned to the palace without revealing anything to Sagbo.

Later, the two princes went to the Kingdom of Dodomin to meet their betrothed. There, the king decided to put them to a test. His daughters were valiant Amazon warriors, proud of their strength and their bravery.

“He who manages to push the back of their betrothed to the ground can leave with her.” He declared.

Thus, a traditional fight between the princes and the princesses began. Zinsou succeeded in beating his beloved with agility and determination. But Sagbo, despite his efforts, was struck down.

Thus, Zinsou returned to Azohouè with his wife, while Sagbo was invited to return under a new moon to try his luck again.

The following day, Sagbo went alone to the fields. There, again, the twin birds appeared and resumed their strange conversation, identical to the one Zinsou had heard. Sagbo, in turn, understood that a mystery hung over the wedding day. Worried, he returned to the palace. But he too decided to keep the secret.

Zinsou's wedding day arrived. While the ceremony was in full swing, a strange phenomenon happened. A rainbow came down from the sky and, as was predicted, seized Zinsou. The prince collapsed and lost his life.

The kingdom was overcome with grief. Sagbo, inconsolable, cried for his brother. As for Zinsou's wife, she returned to her kingdom, broken by grief.

Refusing to accept this loss, Sagbo returned to the fields, hoping to uncover the mystery. Once again, the twin birds appeared.

"We had predicted that a strange event would occur the day of the wedding."

"And it has come to pass."

"But Zinsou could come back to life..."

"How?"

"If someone cuts off the head of his wife and pours her blood on Zinsou's body."

At these words, the birds flew away. Sagbo couldn't move, shocked by the revelation.

The elders would say that in the kingdom of Dodomin, a ferocious beast terrorized the population. Determined, Sagbo went to Dodomin, confronted the creature, and defeated her. He brought her severed head to the king of Dodomin.

In exchange for this feat, he made a terrible request: to obtain the head of Zinsou's wife. The king, bound by his word and grateful, accepted. The princess was sacrificed. Her blood was spilled on Zinsou's body. And thus, in a mysterious breath, life was returned to Zinsou.

Zinsou got up, as if torn from the world of shadows, and found his twin brother.

Since that day, the elders teach: not every secret is to be kept, and any truth that kills can cost more than speaking.

The Twins, Wili, and the Lion of the Forest

A long time ago, in a peaceful village nestled between fertile fields and the depths of the forest, lived a polygamous man. From his first wife, he had twin daughters, gracious and inseparable. From his second wife, he had a son named Wili.

This family made their living by working the fields. The father owned a vast number of lands that he farmed with the help of his family. From this generous land, everyone made their daily bread.

But one day, misfortune struck their home. The first wife died, leaving her two daughters to fate's mercy. From then on, the twin girls were placed under the care of their stepmother, who now had to provide for them.

This woman had a cold heart and was not inclined toward compassion. Each time she served them a meal, she would criticize them.

“You both are greedy!” She would say to them bitterly.

Little by little, a dark thought took root in her mind. Wanting to get rid of the twins, she devised a cruel plan to relegate them to the fields, in the middle of the bush, where a fearsome lion often roamed. Her true intention was to expose them to such danger so that they would perish.

Through persistence and treacherous words, she managed to convince her husband. He had a small hut built in the middle of the field, and all the children--both the twins and Wili--were moved there, away from the family home. From then on, the stepmother regularly went to the fields, bringing food only for her own son. The twins were abandoned and had to appease their hunger with wild fruits that the land produced.

When the stepmother approached the hut, she often sang a song to call Wili:

Wili, va sé
Wili, Wili, va sé
Bernadette va sé
Akpé lé n'kpor va o lo

When hearing this melody, the child immediately came out of the hut, received his food, ate alone, then his mother left without ever giving the twins the slightest glance.

However, a ferocious lion roamed frequently around the fields. For a while, he observed the comings and goings of the woman and the children, waiting for the right moment to satiate his hunger.

One day, the beast tried to imitate the stepmother's voice and reproduce her song. But Wili, knowing that this voice was not that of his mother, remained inside the hut.

Outsmarted, the lion decided to use an even subtler trick. He went to the Fa priest to obtain a voice resembling the stepmother's. The priest performed the necessary rituals. After having sacrificed a rooster and gathered its blood in a calabash that he made the lion drink, the lion finally received a voice identical to that he coveted.

A few days later, he returned to the field and, in a deceptively sweet voice, sang.

Wili, va sé
Wili, Wili, va sé
Bernadette va sé
Akpé lé n'kpor va o lo

This time, Wili, fooled by the perfect imitation, believed he had heard his mother. Without hesitation, he came outside. He had barely crossed the threshold when the lion ambushed and devoured him.

The twins remained inside. Accustomed to being deprived of food, they never responded to their stepmother's call.

Later, the stepmother arrived, carrying the food for her son like normal. She sang, but no one came to meet her.

The twins responded in a voice full of sadness, "Your son was eaten by the lion."

Hearing this, the stepmother went into a furious rage. Blinded by despair, she wanted the twins to suffer the same fate. However, their father, working nearby, happened to arrive at that moment. Realizing the gravity of the situation, intervened, saving his daughters and bringing them with him.

Outraged by the cruelty of his wife, he sent her away from his home, declaring, "A woman with a heart so devious will not remain under my roof."

The situation reached the king, who brought justice and reminded everyone that malice always returns upon him who bore it.

The twins thus grew under their father's protection, and their story remains in the people's memories as an eternal lesson.

The moral of this story is that he who reaped the loss of another often ends up meeting his own ruin.

The Dogs and their Master

Once upon a time, in a village far away, lived a farmer and his large family, made up of his wives and their children. In this home there were also many dogs, raised with care; they were considered loyal companions.

The farmer owned a vast field of beans, the extent of which seemed to go beyond the horizon. He ensured the harvest of this field each season with the aid of his family.

One day, they all went to the fields to begin the harvest. While some of the wives left their children in the shade of a tree where the dogs kept a watchful eye, other wives carried their children on their backs, combining their work with motherhood.

Under the blazing sun, the women devoted themselves tirelessly to gathering the crops. At regular intervals, they halted their work to sort through some of the harvested beans they had cooked over a dimly lit fire before immediately resuming their task.

Finally, overcome with exhaustion, the farmer and his wives decided to stop their work for the day to recover. But when everyone readied themselves to take a portion of the cooked meal, the dog who was the mother of all the other dogs began to bark insistently.

Annoyed, one of the women turned to her with a strict look and yelled, “Look at this lazy dog and her children! You have come to the field and done nothing. If you had human reason, you could have helped us in the harvest!”

The dog remained silent.

After the meal, the woman fed their children, their husband, then the dogs, before resuming their harvest work.

However, to everyone’s surprise, the dog rose, followed by her children. Thus, against all expectations, the dogs sat down to work next to the humans. They picked beans with amazing dexterity, working until nightfall. Never was a harvest so abundant.

Returning home, the farmer, amazed by such a miracle, let escape the words: “My dogs too have harvested beans.”

At these words, the women were seized with laughter. But this laughter did not last, for soon after, the farmer and his wives all died.

The elders teach that there are words that are better left unsaid. It is never appropriate to say, “the dog has harvested beans.”

Mimbamin and the Pact Before Birth

My story flies and flies and lands on a hunter and an old woman. This old woman never had any children. She lived alone, retired in a hut deep in the forest. As for the hunter, he roamed the forests tirelessly, hunting game and living off the fruits of his exploits.

One day, his feet led him deep into a forest where, within living memory, he had never hunted. A way away, he glimpsed a dim light, flickering in the night. Intrigued, he approached it, walking a long way until he reached the mysterious glow.

When he neared it, he discovered a humble hut. An old woman lived there, having placed her light outside, explaining the light he had seen from afar.

The hunter knocked on the door.

“Who is it?” asked a trembling voice.

“It’s me, the hunter. Who are you?”

“I am an old woman who lives here,” she replied.

The old woman then walked outside and welcomed the hunter with kindness. She offered him water and food, then let him stay for the night.

At dawn, the hunter left, retracing the path he had taken the previous day. He found the game he had hunted before discovering the hut, gathered it, and brought it back to the old woman. She immediately began smoking the meat, preparing ample provisions.

While she busied herself, the hunter asked her a question.

“Old mother, you don’t have any children?”

“No,” she replied. “I never had any, and my old age is spent in solitude.”

Moved by her words, the hunter decided to stay with her. Little by little, he took up residence in the hut.

Days passed, then seasons, and finally years. A sincere affection was born between them, so much so that the hunter ended up marrying the old woman.

Against all expectations, a miraculous event took place: the old woman became pregnant. She who had believed her age too old to conceive henceforth carried life in her stomach. This brought immense joy to the hunter.

However, the old hut was in poor condition, and the hunter thought to renovate it. One day, while hunting, he glimpsed two strange creatures hanging from vines, like infants. He readied himself to shoot when suddenly a voice stopped him:

“Don’t shoot!”

The hunter lowered his gun and watched. The two creatures were talking. One was dressed in black, the other in white. The creature dressed in white spoke to the other in a prophetic voice.

“I ran into you today. The day when I will come into this world, I will be a girl. I will grow into a woman and be called Mimbamin. When the day comes to renovate my mother’s hut, she will ask me to prepare palm-nut soup and fetch water to feed the workers. It is then you will come and find me.”

“Okay,” responded the other. “We made this pact.”

The hunter, a silent witness to this strange scene, saw the creatures disappear. Troubled, he returned home.

A few moons later, the old woman gave birth to a beautiful baby girl. She decided to name her Mimbamin. The hunter, although shaken by this memory, did not oppose.

Years passed. Mimbamin grew up and became a young girl. The hunter, loyal to his plan, undertook the renovations of the hut. He gathered wood, straw, and sand. He then called the young people in the neighboring lands to come and help him,

The construction began in lively solidarity. The hunter walked towards the lake, as if driven by a premonition. Meanwhile, the mother, unaware of the pact made before the birth, asked Mimbamin to go fetch water to cook a meal for the workers.

The young girl took her water jar and took off. But on the path, a serpent bit her. She collapsed, unmoving, as if she was dead.

At the hut, the news thrust everyone into distress. They desperately awaited the hunter's return.

At the same moment, at the edge of the lake, the hunter glimpsed in the water the silhouette of his daughter, accompanied by another creature. This creature, loyal to the pact, tried to pull her into the depths with her.

Without hesitating, the hunter raised his gun and shot into the water, thus breaking the invisible link that united them.

He ran to the hut. There he found his daughter lying down, lifeless. He took a black string and attached one end to Mimbamin’s wrist and the other to her mother’s.

And so, as if by a breath returning from far away, the young girl opened her eyes. She came back to life under the cries of joy and the amazement of all. Mimbamin continued to grow. She became a woman, married, and led a peaceful life. She lived long enough to see her parents to their final rest, burying them with love just as they had once brought her back to life.

Torgboryè and the Kingdom of Women

Once upon a time in a kingdom far away, there lived a beloved queen, gracious, kind, and of an enchanting beauty, with a naturally light and luminous complexion.

This kingdom had a surprising peculiarity: it was made up entirely of women, all of them alike, as if they came from the same mold. Not a single man existed there.

Far from this kingdom lived a young man named Torgboryè, after a generous master who had taken him in. One day, readying himself for a voyage, he gave Torgboryè a formal instruction:

“Never approach the magic jar in my room, and above all, never look at it.”

Torgboryè pretended to accept this order. But when his master had taken leave, his curiosity won him over. He entered the forbidden room, raised the jar's lid, and discovered ripe, mouthwatering, golden bananas inside. He began to eat them every day with pleasure, until he had depleted them entirely.

One day, after having emptied the jar, he came to look at it again. This time, he saw clear water inside, like a mirror reflecting his image back to him. Intrigued, he looked at the water for a long while. Suddenly, as he gazed into it, he disappeared and found himself in an unknown kingdom; that of only women.

When they saw this man, the women were seized with amazement and joy, as they had never seen a being like him. Torgboryè, bewildered, tried to keep himself out of sight. He dug a hole in the trunk of the biggest tree found at the entrance to the kingdom and settled there. But, unable to totally fit himself in the hollow, he let his erect and visible phallus protrude from the tree.

This unusual sight gradually caught the women's attention. Intrigued by this unknown presence, they neared the tree. But it was in this spot that they would usually come to satisfy their needs. Little by little, curiosity gave way to desire. The tree thus became a mysterious place where they came one by one, looking to indulge in a pleasure they had not known before.

The rumor spread throughout the kingdom until even the queen heard of it. Interested, she went to the tree herself to assess the situation. Wanting to uncover the mystery, she ordered the tree to be cut down.

When the trunk was opened, the women found Torgboryè inside, still alive. They brought him out of his hiding place and, under the queen's orders, brought him to the palace.

From then on, he became the only man in the kingdom, and all the women came to him to satisfy their desires. Seeing this, the queen decided to give him in marriage to the kingdom's princess. Torgboryè proposed.

However, being the only man amongst so many women, he was quickly exhausted by the women' s incessant demands. Desiring a more peaceful life, he decided to leave the kingdom with his wife and return to his native land.

They lived there together for nine days. But after nine days, the young woman expressed her desire to return to her kingdom. Torgboryè accepted, and she left.

A few days later, loneliness weighed heavily on Torgboryè. Unable to find anything to do, he decided to return to the kingdom of women to bring back his wife. Before leaving, he took two companions with him: an ant and a monkey.

Arriving in the kingdom, he began looking for his wife. But all the women looked so similar that it was impossible to tell her apart. Only the queen could distinguish the women from one another. Distraught, he went to the queen to seek her help.

The queen accepted, but on one condition: he had to complete some tests first.

She gave him a mixture of flour, sand, and gari and asked him to separate the three. The task was difficult, but the ant, with patience and thoroughness, helped him separate each grain: the flour to one side, the gari to the other, and the sand to another. Torgboryè presented his work to the queen, who understood him to be serious.

Then she asked him to pick vegetables growing at great heights. The monkey, agile and skilled, helped him complete this task successfully.

Finally, the queen asked him a question.

“Do you know how to recognize your wife?”

Torgboryè answered yes. All the women were lined up in front of him. He carefully observed them, a first time, then a second time, but their identical faces deeply troubled him. He was unable to distinguish which one was his wife.

It was then that the monkey offered to help him. He asked Torgboryè to cut off his tail. After this sacrifice, the monkey walked the row of women and, guided by his instinct, identified the wife of Torgboryè. A trace of blood left on the foot of the woman because of this act allowed Torgboryè to recognize her with certitude.

Immediately, Torgboryè reattached the monkey’s tail, then presented his wife to the queen.

The queen, admiring his courage and his perseverance, commended his bravery. As a sign of gratitude, she allowed him to leave with his wife and gave him two more women in marriage.

Thus, Torgboryè had multiple wives and founded a lineage.