The background of the entire cover is a vibrant, detailed illustration of a tropical jungle. A woman dressed entirely in blue, including a long-sleeved dress and a wide-brimmed hat, is walking through the dense foliage. She is positioned in the lower center of the frame, moving towards the right. The jungle is filled with various types of green leaves, including large palm fronds and broad, heart-shaped leaves. Interspersed among the greenery are clusters of small, bright red flowers and larger, round red fruits. The overall style is that of a classic children's book illustration, with a rich color palette and a sense of depth.

# La Diabliesse and the Baby

Story by Richardo Keens-Douglas  
Art by Marie Lafrance



When I think of La Diabliesse I get goose bumps all over.  
She is a tall woman, very beautiful, impeccably groomed.  
She wears a glamorous, wide-brimmed straw hat  
that covers part of her face, and she always wears  
a long gown, right down to the ground, that covers her toes.

Do you know why she does that?

Because La Diabliesse has one human foot and one cow foot.

Yes, you heard me: one human foot and one hoof.

She likes to go for long walks in the moonlight.

They say that if you make the mistake of talking with her,  
she'll take your soul, just like that. They also say that,  
because she doesn't have any children of her own,  
she tries to take other people's children, especially babies.

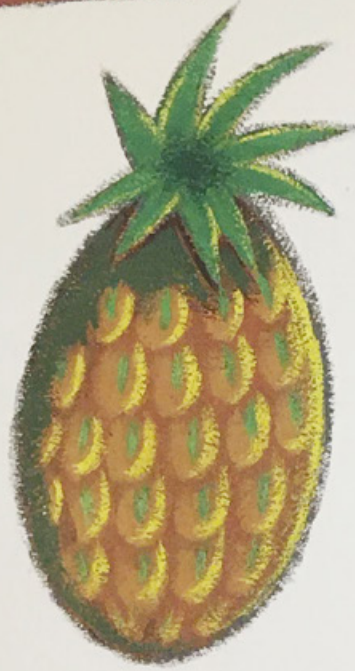
She comes in the middle of the night  
and brings them back to her mountain home,  
and you would never see them again.

No one knows where La Diabliesse lives.









The country house where my grandmother lived  
is surrounded by a lot of cocoa trees and fruit trees.

One dark, dark night it was raining outside;  
the moon didn't come out at all.

When the rain hits those trees, it makes a lot of noise –  
pow-wishh, psssshhh, tac tac tac tac.

That noise, mixed with the thunder and lightning,  
is enough to wake the dead.









Now that night,  
the only sound you could have heard over that din  
was the crying of a baby and the sweet voice  
of a woman singing a lullaby.  
The sound was coming from my grandmother's house.  
Granny was sitting by the crib  
and rocking a frightened little baby, and singing,  
"Don't cry no more, sleep my little one,  
Don't cry no more, sleep my little one..."









...when there was a knock on the door.

Granny stopped singing. The baby kept on crying.

“Who is it?” Granny asked.

“It’s just a little lady,” the voice said. “I would like  
to shelter from the rain. Would you mind if I just sat  
on your verandah?”

Granny got a little suspicious right away, because  
it seemed very strange for a woman to be out  
in the middle of the night, in all that bad weather,  
away up by Granny’s house.

But then Granny thought maybe this lady missed her last ride  
home and decided to walk and was caught in the rain.

So Granny with her good heart said,  
“All right, you sit on the verandah until the rain eases up.”









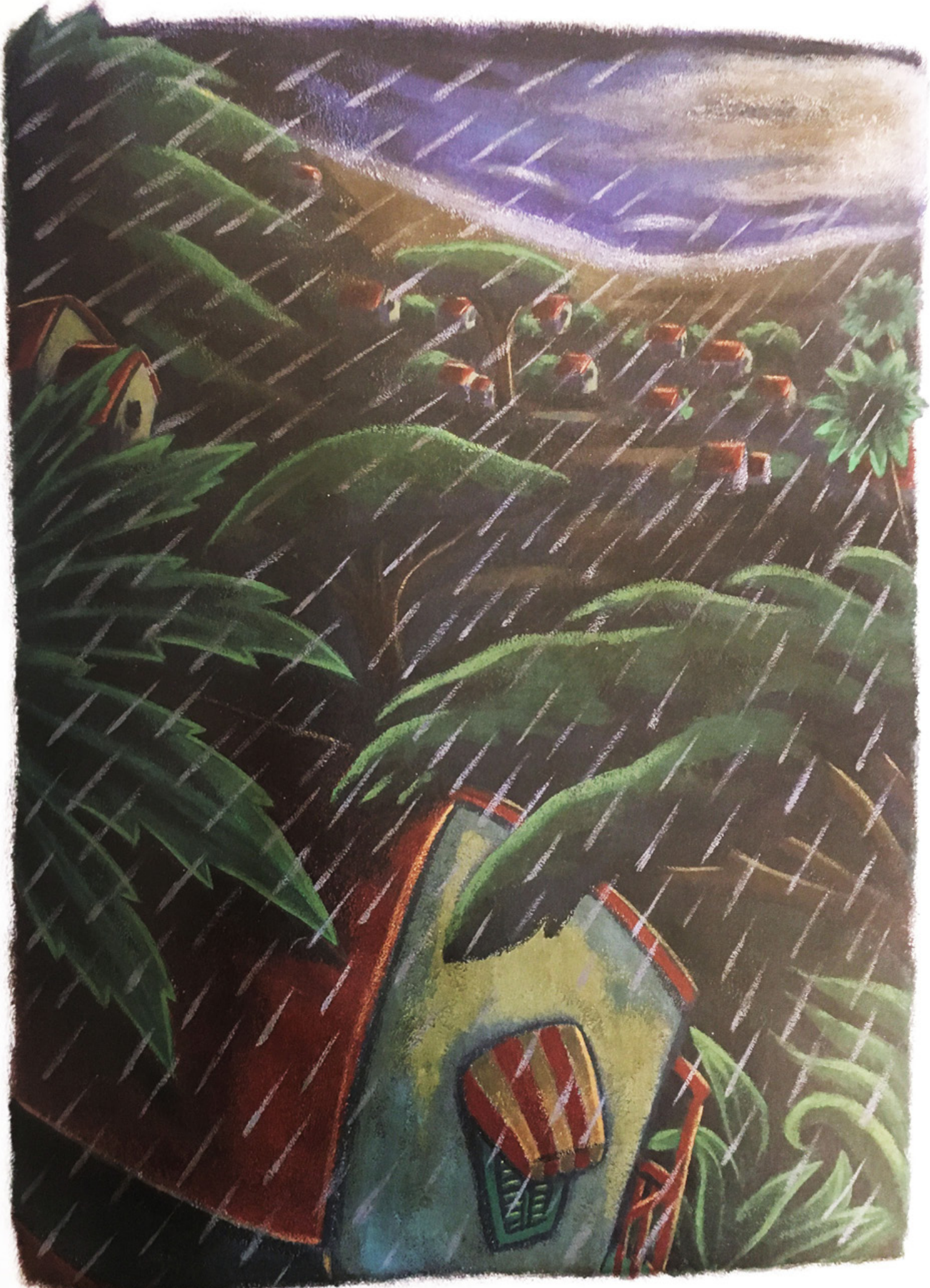
There was a silence...

All you could hear was the rain getting heavier  
and the wind dancing with the trees.

"It is raining really heavily outside and I'm getting very wet.  
Would it be all right if I came in and sheltered from the weather?"

The voice came through the window blinds  
just as clear as a bell. Granny said,  
"All right, just come in and sit by the door."









Very slowly  
the door opened and the woman walked into the house.

She was wearing a wide-brimmed  
straw hat that was covering part of her face.

But from the little that was revealed,  
you could tell she was beautiful.

It was a face Granny had never  
seen in the neighbourhood before.

She had said she was a little lady.

But the woman was tall like a young coconut tree,  
and wearing a long dress covering her toes.

The bottom of the dress was wet and dirty  
from the rain and red mud outside.









Granny put a chair by the door  
and the woman sat down and didn't say another word.  
The baby kept on crying and Granny kept on singing,  
never taking her eyes off the stranger.

"Oh no no no, don't cry no more  
Everything's gonna be the same as before  
Don't cry no more, sleep my little one  
Don't cry no more."

The baby wouldn't stop crying.

Then the woman said,

"Let me hold the baby for you a while."

Granny said, "No, thanks. It's all right."

"Let me hold the baby for you. I'm very good with children,"  
the stranger asked a second time.

Granny said, "No, thanks."









And right away

Granny started to take precautions.

She picked up the baby and held him close to her bosom.

Granny suspected it was La Diabliesse

because she was said to have a habit of always

asking the same question three times.

So Granny just sat there with the baby in her arms,

looking at the lady.

The weather outside was not easing up.

The light in the room was like a small sunset with shadows.







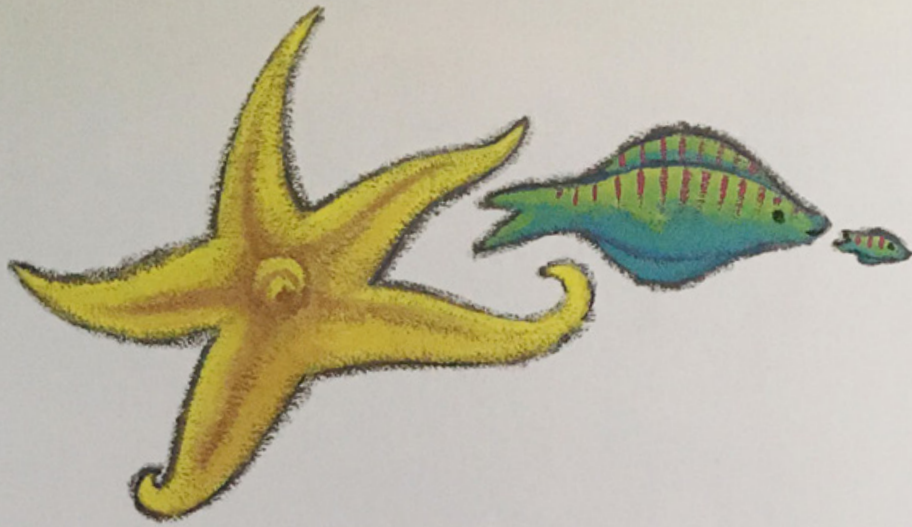


All of a sudden,  
the woman just stood up.  
She seemed taller than before.  
And for the third time she said,  
“Let me hold the baby for you. I’m very good with children.”  
“No, thank you. The baby is all right in my arms,”  
said Granny. The woman looked at the baby,  
smiled at Granny, turned and walked  
out the door into the rain.









By the time Granny rushed to look out the window  
to see where she was going, the woman had disappeared.

But the next morning,  
because of all the red mud from outside,  
on the floor of Granny's house there were footprints  
where she had sat and where she had walked on the verandah.  
One human foot, one hoof, one human foot, one hoof.  
Yes, it was La Diabliesse that had come to visit that night,  
and if Granny had given her the baby to hold,  
she would have disappeared like lightning,  
and I would not be here to tell this tale,  
because that little baby  
was me.









Also by Richardo Keens-Douglas:

*The Nutmeg Princess*  
*Freedom Child of the Sea*