

*Legend of the
St Ann's Flood*

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The decree

“This is a witch trial and I will not stand for it!” Mama Dlo wailed.

She shook her head defiantly and her golden earrings – all five hundred of them – clanged together like wind chimes in a thunderstorm. Her bone necklaces, which equalled the number of her earrings, clattered like a dancing skeleton and her shiny green scales sounded like fingernails on a blackboard when they rubbed together.

The people of the forest shivered with fear. Jabari, a human child, wriggled his hands, tied together with a cat’s claw vine, and tightly closed his tear-filled eyes to block out the gruesome sight of Mama Dlo. She was, after all, a giant anaconda with a human face, quite hideous, with long flowing locks of silvery hair. Her eyes tended to bulge out of her head and her chin drooped below her forked tongue. Only her husband thought she was beautiful.

He was Papa Bois, half man and half deer. He looked thoughtfully at Jabari and picked a savonette leaf from his tangled beard, which resembled white cotton candy. Then he opened his mouth wide and roared: “I am the king of the forest and ...”

“I am the queen,” Mama Dlo interrupted.

Jabari trembled. A matte lizard scampered by a tree and brushed past a tarantula. A purple flower from a savonette tree spun aimlessly in the troubled air. It came to rest on top of Jabari’s head. He shook his head but the flower would not come loose. He wished now he had obeyed his mother yesterday and gone inside the house before dusk. Instead, he had hidden behind the mango tree in