

# Pyram's Monologue

*Nostalgia and fantasy about the old country*

Frankétienne

| Haiti |

translated by Asselin Charles

*excerpted from*  
*Pèlin tèt*  
*The Noose (1997; revised 2023)*

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**Polydor:** Ask your boss for a leave, take a few sick days off.

**Pyram:** I can't afford to get sick.

**Polydor:** I mean, paid sick days.

**Pyram:** Okay, but I still wouldn't take a vacation.

**Polydor:** How's that?

**Pyram:** I would just get a second job to make money on the side. I haven't saved enough yet, with all those people waiting for me to come back with a fortune from the land of milk and honey. I'll take a vacation when I've piled up enough dough. Then I'll take three months off doing nothing. I'll spend one month with each of my three baby mamas. I'll just lie in bed and sleep in silk sheets. Once in a while I'll open my eyes and look up to see if the ceiling is

not in fact the heavenly vault. Then I'll go back to sleep and forget about all my trials and tribulations.

I'll become Saint Michael the Archangel. I'll become Saint James the Elder on his magnificent white horse. After that, I'll get up all refreshed. I'll get dressed in my fancy foreign clothes. I'll put on a smashing shirt and a pair of shiny zipped up boots. A heavy gold chain around my neck, a huge gold medal on my chest, a gold wristwatch on my left wrist, a gold bracelet on my right wrist, diamond rings on every finger. I'll be strutting around and really partying. Bottles of rum! Grilled pork! Fried plantains with avocados! Pots full of rice and red kidney beans! Piles of Splendid and Comme-il-faut cigarettes! Tomatoes, onions, red hot goat peppers! Barbecued goat! All that spread on a table decorated with hibiscus flowers, vervain, laurel, and basil leaves. And look at all those high society type women and their panting escorts come to pay their respect! People streaming from all the alleys and corridors like crazy ants come to gawk at Pyram who's come back a foreign Haitian, a country White man! The feast will last three days and three nights.

After that, I'll go visit my mother in her province and spend a whole week with her. As soon as I arrive, the whole family will gather in the yard where my umbilical cord is buried. Crowding under the silk cotton tree, we'll offer one hell of a thanksgiving service to the Vodou *lwes* of Guinea. When the service is over, we'll get the dancing going under the bower to the sounds of the banjo, the manuba, the accordion, and the maracas. Pyram will raise his voice and sing, and all the people of his village will applaud and shout, "Bravo!" Then I'll go back to Port-au-Prince and I'll build three houses there, one for each of my three baby mamas. I'm not talking about some old shanty with leaking iron sheet roof and walls made of old herring case wood. No, man. I'm talking about real houses, high-class houses. Three small mansions, real cement monuments, with mahogany doors, windows with jalousies, multicolored mosaic floor, granite stairs, delicate ironwork, and fine furniture all over the place! And I'll be going back and forth visiting the home of each of my children's mothers in turn. I'm rich! I frequent high places and I hobnob with my rich and powerful peers!

**Polydor:** And afterward?

**Pyram:** And afterward... Nothing!

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