

The Love of the Forest
A Brazilian Story: Portuguese
By Aline Brasil

The sun rises above the Amazon rainforest and the huge, evergreen trees allow rays of light to pass between their leaves and paint the forest floor in dappled shadows. In one of the taller trees, little monkey Dora is waking up. Dora is a pretty little monkey with brown hair and a long tail. She wishes that she could sleep some more, but there is no time to lose. Today is the day of the big party.

Monkeys will come from far and wide to attend the party, even from neighbouring countries such as Peru and Bolivia. The big party, held in the Brazilian part of the Amazon Rainforest, is always a very big success. There is music and dancing, and often a monkey will find a mate and fall in love.

Dora is very excited because this year she has been asked to help the older monkeys of the community with the organizing of the party. This is a very great responsibility and there is no time to lose.

Dora arrives at the meeting early and is very pleased to see her friend Tinga. Tinga is an indigenous name meaning 'of white colour'. This is the perfect name for Dora's friend as he has white hair and green eyes. Tinga is a very rare and shy monkey, but when he sees Dora his eyes light up with joy.

The other monkeys often laugh at Tinga's strange white hair and green eyes, but Dora does not like such jokes. She thinks that her friend is very handsome, even though her heart belongs to another monkey called Paco. Paco is a big, strong monkey with thick, black hair who lives in the forest on the very edge of Bolivia.

Dora first met Paco at the big party the previous year. They danced together only once but Dora knew then that her heart belonged to him. She also remembers that Paco was arrogant, and that he did not pay her very much attention. He had said that Dora was too young, and that she was always lost in her own fantasy world.

Despite all of this, Dora is looking forward to seeing Paco again, and such thoughts make her even more excited about the party.

Chief Ubirajara, a very big and very brave monkey, calls the meeting to order and begins to hand out tasks to the assembled monkeys. Eventually it is Dora's turn to be given her special task for the day, but the little monkey is so lost in her own thoughts that she does not hear Chief Ubirajara's instructions.

'...Dora! Dora! Have you been listening to a word I have said to you? You are always lost in your fantasy world, even today when there is so much work to be done.'

Dora is startled and stammers her reply. 'I... I am very sorry, Chief Ubirajara. Could you please repeat what it is you would like me to do today.'

Chief Ubirajara is a little impatient with young Dora but he understands that she is still young and that she is also very excited about the party.

'You must find for us the most beautiful and delicious cupuaçu and açai berries and the finest Brazil nuts for our feast tonight.'

Chief Ubirajara claps his hands and smiles at the eager faces gathered in the forest clearing. 'Now that everyone knows what to do, let's get to work!'

And so the monkeys part company, each one determined to fulfil their task in preparation for the big party.

Dora very much likes the idea of being in charge of finding the food for the feast. She loves to explore the forest, jumping from branch to branch between the tall trees. She also loves to look at the beautiful plants and rich wildlife that fill her beloved forest.

‘I am the best person to choose for a job such as this,’ thinks Dora, as she sets off on her journey, determined to climb the tallest trees in order to find the most purple açais and sweetest cupuaçus.

After many hours of hard work, Dora’s bag is filled with a rich bounty of fruits and nuts. She thinks how proud Chief Ubirajara will be when he sees what a good job she has done. This thought makes the little monkey very happy as she hoists the bag onto her shoulders and heads for home.

When Dora is halfway home, her thoughts are interrupted by a strange sound in the forest. She looks all about her but does not see anything unusual. She tells herself to take extra care, but before long her thoughts drift again to the coming party and the dancing and celebrating that will be had by all. She thinks about how she will tidy her hair, and what she will say when she sees Paco.

‘I wonder if he will still think that I am too young. Even so, he will surely be impressed by the beautiful fruits and nuts I have gathered for the feast?’

Dora’s thoughts are interrupted again when she notices a rich, juicy cupuaçu on the forest floor in front of her. ‘How lucky to find a beautiful fruit such as this,’ she thinks, and runs to pick up the cupuaçu and add it to her bag.

But as soon as Dora’s hand reaches out towards the fruit, a huge net pulls tight around her body and hoist the little monkey up into the air.

Dora knows about such traps and is very scared. She cries out for help but the birds of the forest do not seem interested in her suffering. She struggles to free herself from the heavy netting but it is no use at all.

‘Help! Help me!’ cries Dora. But there are no animals around to help, and she is unable to wriggle free of the heavy netting by herself.

A great sadness descends upon Dora; her strength leaves her and she is unable to struggle any longer. She does not understand why humans set such traps to capture the monkeys of the forest. Her eyes fill with tears at the thought of being dragged away from her home, of never again jumping from branch to branch among the ancient trees, or of experiencing the great rain storms.

‘We do not do the humans any harm,’ she thinks. ‘We enjoy the forest and only wish to be free. I love this forest so much and I would not know how to live if I were taken away from all of this rich life, all the beautiful fruits that grow in the trees and the fresh water that runs in the river. How will I survive if they take me away from my friend Tinga?’

Dora hears a sound coming from the trees at the edge of the clearing. Human voices! They are coming towards her. ‘This is the end!’ she thinks. ‘I cannot escape.’

As the voices get closer and closer, Dora thinks about how much she loves her forest, how much she has *always* loved her forest.

Suddenly a wind whips up from the forest floor, a spinning whirlwind that heads straight for the humans. Dora can hear laughter in the air. Then a small boy appears out of nowhere. The boy has flaming red hair, he has very big ears, and his feet are pointing the wrong way, sticking out behind him as if twisted all the way around.

The whirlwind comes to a stop and Dora realizes that this is, in fact, another boy; this boy appears very dark, he has only one leg and wears upon his head a bright red hood. He has a pipe in his mouth and is smiling gaily as if having a wonderful time.

Dora cannot believe her eyes. 'Is it really Curupira and Saci come to save me?' she thinks. The little monkey had only heard of the two boys in stories told by her ancestors. Their existence belonged in legend and as such Dora was never sure if the legend was true.

At that moment a voice fills Dora's ears. 'When you love the forest, little one, the forest also loves you. This is the protection that I send to you to keep you safe.'

Now Dora is sure that what she sees is real, and she is filled with gratitude and love.

Saci begins to spin on his leg once more, creating a great whirlwind all about him. Curupira arms himself with an ugly face, and together the two head towards the humans making a terrible noise that would scare any grown man right down to his soul.

The humans run from the forest as fast as they can, never once looking back towards Curupira and Saci; and they promise all the time that they will never again enter the forest to set their traps.

When the humans have gone, Curupira and Saci free Dora from her net and make sure that she is not harmed in any way. The little monkey is so grateful that she offers her bag of fruits and nuts as a way of saying thank you to the brave boys of the forest.

Curupira takes the bag with gratitude. He smiles at Dora saying, 'always take care of the forest and the forest will always protect you in return.' With these words he walks from the clearing on his backwards feet and disappears among the tall trees. Saci then turns into a whirlwind once again and spins off in to the forest behind his friend.

Dora pauses for just a moment before running back in the direction of her home, eager to tell her magical story to the monkeys who are already dancing and celebrating at the big party.

When she arrives back home, Dora apologizes to Chief Ubirajara for not bringing her bag of fruit as instructed. She eagerly explains how Curupira and Saci saved her from being kidnapped by the humans and of how she offered the fruit as a thank you for their bravery. Chief Ubirajara nods patiently at young Dora and seems only grateful that she has returned safely.

Just then Paco steps out from the crowd that has gathered to hear Dora's amazing story. 'You are really a silly monkey, aren't you!' he says, in his proud voice. 'Only a dreamer such as you could believe in the legend of Curupira and Saci.'

Dora realizes that Paco is actually a big fool. She tells herself that she will have nothing to do with him any longer. 'He is too proud and arrogant and I have been foolish to feel anything for a monkey such as him,' she thinks to herself.

Then little Dora spots her friend Tinga entering the party from the forest. She runs towards him with a smile.

Tinga is very happy to see that his friend is safe.

'Where have you been, Dora? What happened?'

Dora tells Tinga all about her adventure in the forest. She tells about the humans and being caught in the net and meeting the two legends of the forest. Dora also realizes how much she cares for Tinga and remembers how it was him that she thought of the most when she was caught in the net, and how she felt so very sad at the thought of never seeing him again.

Tinga and Dora are very happy and reach out and hug one another.

'I am so glad that you are safe, Dora.'

'And I am glad to be with you again, Tinga,' the little monkey says as she takes him by the hand and leads him onto the dance floor.

The party fills with music and laughter. The sun goes down and the stars fill the night sky above the ancient rain forest. Dora and Tinga dance together all night long, happy to be with one another, happy to be at the big party in the forest.

Out of the corner of her eye, Dora is sure she sees a whirlwind and a boy with flame red hair running between the trees in the forest. She is grateful to be surrounded by her friends and by the beautiful forest she calls home.

Tips of pronunciation (if necessary)

curupira	koo-roo-pee-rah
saci	sa-ci
cupuaçu	koo-pu-ah-sue
açaí	a-sa-hee
Ubirajara	oo-bee-ra-ja-ra
tinga	chin-ga
paco	pa-co (a as in arm)
dora	do-ra