A large, textured tree trunk dominates the background, with two children and a parrot. A young girl with curly hair, wearing a white tank top and a green skirt, is lying on the left side of the trunk. A young boy, shirtless and wearing blue shorts, is lying on the right side. A red parrot is perched on the top right of the trunk. The text 'CHILDREN'S AMAZON' is overlaid in the center, with 'CHILDREN'S' in yellow and 'AMAZON' in green. Below it, 'ARAQUÊM ALCÂNTARA' is written in white.

# CHILDREN'S AMAZON

ARAQUÊM ALCÂNTARA









# CHILDREN'S AMAZON





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# CHILDREN'S AMAZON

ARAQUÉM ALCÂNTARA

PHOTOGRAPHS

ARAQUÉM ALCÂNTARA

TEXTS

MORRIS KACHANI

ILLUSTRATION

ANGELO ABU







C6 Bank and Mastercard are happy to present you with this book about children of the Amazon.

Just like you, these young people like playing close to nature, listening to stories and singing.

For the forest and people who live in it to continue to exist, everyone needs to know about the Amazon and how important it is to the planet. This is why we wanted to make this book for you.

We hope that these photos and illustrations will take you and your imagination to the heart of the forest. And we hope that one day you will get to see it up close!!







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I'm Araquém.

In the Tupi language my name means "little bird". I think my parents already knew that when I grew up I would like to fly around and get to know every corner of nature.

I have been a photographer and journalist for more than fifty years, and my greatest joy is to travel around this country taking pictures of people, landscapes and animals.

I have written dozens of books, but this is the first one dedicated to children. Along with journalist Morris Kachani and armed with cameras, recorders and drones, I traveled for more than three months throughout the Amazon in search of stories.

There are millions of animals there, from jaguars to small insects, giant trees, and rivers that look like a sea of fresh water.

There is so much water that rivers even flow in the sky.

I discovered different ways of spending one's childhood: children living in houses, apartments, huts, *taperas*, shacks, huts, and even floating houses. The Amazon is magical! Everyone should get to visit it one day – touch it, feel it, swim in the streams, hug a giant tree, listen to the singing of the *uirapuru*, wear the hide of the Curupira...

This book is an invitation for you to get to know some of the treasures that are hidden in the largest rainforest on Earth.

*Araquém Alcântara*





RAONI, 8 YEARS OLD

# XINGU IRON MAN

*Xingu Indigenous Park, Mato Grosso*







**M**y name is Raoni, but it's better to call me Iron Man, which is my favorite superhero. My father says that Iron Man doesn't exist, that if I want to be an Iron Man, I have to study hard. I do study, but I also know that he exists. At least in my imagination.

I live in Xingu Indigenous Park, in the village of Kamayurá. I have no room or bed of my own; my house is a very big hut, made of tree trunks and branches and covered with straw.


My sisters, Mirela and Sayuri, taught me how to eat fish with bones. Here in the Xingu, the older brothers always take care of the younger ones and teach them what they know.

I have to take care of myself and also take care of others. My father, Acauã, is the village chief. He makes bows and arrows and teaches us how to use them when we go hunting and fishing. I help him by carrying the baskets and looking for animals in the forest. The children don't go far away alone - they can get lost or even turn into an animal.

The days starts very early in the village as soon as the sun is up. At that time I jump out of the hammock and head outside. I just whistle and Kaory appears. He is my best friend. We love soccer and we love playing together! Our team is Barcelona Kamayurá - we even won the Alto Xingu championship.







My mother gets mad when I arrive back at the hut late and my eyes are red from playing in the sand and I didn't have time to eat the *perereba*, our cassava porridge that she makes for breakfast the night before and leaves out for me.


At school, we speak two languages: Kamayurá and Portuguese. I have a tough time learning Portuguese, and my father is always scolding me. He tells me that it is important to be able to talk to the white man without fear.

We also learn math, science, Kamayurá history, singing, crafts with buriti straw, and also how to plant potatoes, manioc, bananas, sugar cane and pineapples.



One of my favorite homework assignments is when the teacher asks me to record conversations with my elders. My father lends me his cell phone and I forget about the world for a while listening to those stories.

There are many legends. There is the story of the brothers Sun and Moon, the invention of the macaw, the aroma of *pequi* (souari nut) and lots of animal stories: the woodpecker that married his daughter, the bird that summons the rain, the snake that grew in a woman's belly, the jaguars that ate people in the villages, the fish that lived in a tree trunk, the canoe that turned into an animal...















The Ipavu lagoon is our sacred lagoon, protected by the gods. That's where everybody bathes.

This is one of my most favorite moments in life, you know? Looking up at the sky all red, with the fish jumping around. It's so beautiful...

The lake has no piranhas and very few alligators, which is very good. But you have to be careful with the stingrays; they have a stinger that make your whole body hurt. Some people even faint from the sting.

The only thing I'm afraid of is the anaconda snake. But it's easy to know where they hang out. If you see bubbles in the water, it's because there's one down there, breathing. Then for sure you have to stay far away.

I'm not even afraid of jaguars, let alone people! During last year's Kuarup (funeral ritual), I wrestled a boy from the Kalapalo village and I didn't end up winning. But this year... he'd better get ready for the return of Iron Man!











ARIWALU, 11 YEARS OLD

# SPIDER MONKEY

*Xingu Indigenous Park, Mato Grosso*







**M**y name is Ariwalu, but you can call me Lalita - it's easier. I was born in Kamayurá village. Here everyone has pets: cats, dogs, parakeets and coatis. In the hut next to ours there is even a seagull with its wings clipped.

I always wanted a little monkey. One day my Uncle Péry, who is a hunter and loves joking around with me, went out to hunt a pig that was eating the manioc from our crops, and he came back with Cíntia!

He found her walking alone through the forest. Maybe some hunter had killed her mother. She has been with us for three years now. I know she will never go back to the forest again, but here she has lots of love and lots of trees to play in. She loves jumping and swinging in the branches with her arms, legs, and even her tail, looking like a giant hairy spider. She can hang just by her tail. And she must weigh about 10 kilos!

In the first week, Cíntia didn't want to come near me, but little by little she became gentle. Today she even lets me play with her like a doll, can you believe it? She also likes playing hide and seek. When it's time for me to do my homework, she sits next to me and plays by herself with little stumps of wood.



I like taking Cíntia for a bath in the lagoon. All my friends want to play with her. Cíntia is very jealous; if she doesn't get to play, she gets really mad.

My little monkey is also a troublemaker! She plays with our three cats and the dogs, even when they don't want her to.

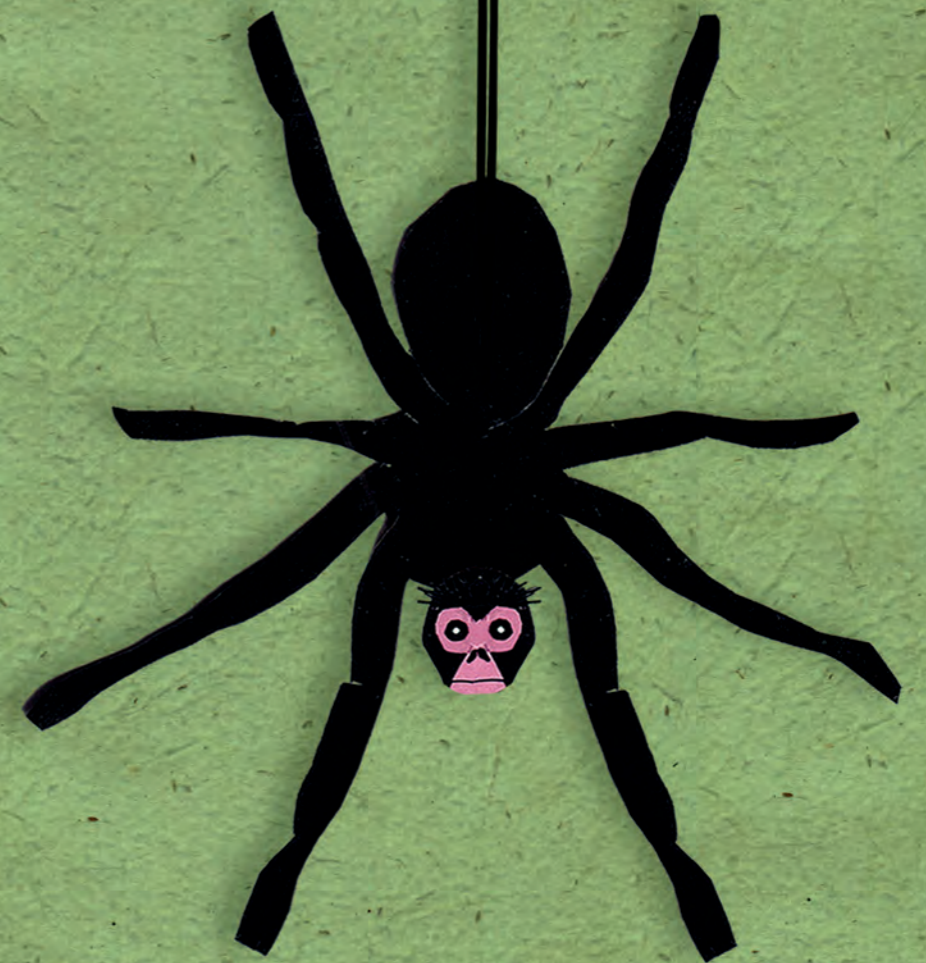
She is like my daughter: I take care of her, feed her, and play with her a lot.

Cíntia loves banana, macaúba palm fruit, seeds, leaves, insects...I've even seen her sneak a soft drink from a can, but I never let her do that.

She sleeps with me in the hammock. We put a diaper on her for pee and poop, and we cuddle up. She looks a lot like us, but she only has four fingers.

The other day, the chief of Kuikuru village asked to take Cíntia for himself. I told my mother that if she left I would stop eating and would get very thin. And I felt like saying to the chief "why don't you go into the bush and get your own monkey?"

Life without Cíntia would be very sad.









PEDRO HENRIQUE,  
12 YEARS OLD

# LAND OF AÇAÍ

*Periquitaquara,  
Pará*





**I**f I told you that the place I live in is enchanted, would you believe me?

I live in Periquitaquara. Taquara means “sound” in the language of the people who lived here many, many years ago. And periquita (parakeet) - you know what that means.

Every day, at 5 in the morning and 5 in the afternoon, near Furo do Maracujá, the sky is filled with green... It’s just a huge racket! A giant flock of parakeets covers everything. Here there are trees that walk, trees that turn into people, and so many birds that there are nights when even the Matinta Pereira, an old witch that turned into a bird, starts singing that ominous song of hers. She only stops wailing when we offer her tobacco, coffee, cachaça, or fish. It’s hard to forget the ugly sound of her screeching.









Periquitaquara is a wetland forest surrounded by islands. Depending on the season, the river floods the entire area and we can only get to school by boat. We don't even have a soccer field to play on because everything is under water.

The açai trees are grateful, though. They love the sun but they also need a lot of water. Yes, this is the land of açai. This is where you get the best açai in the world! It's nothing like the açai people drink in the rest of Brazil. Ours is freshly picked from the backyard of our house, which is filled with açai trees.

Harvesting açai is a lot of fun. When we climb up to pick the bunch, the palm tree sways a little back and forth, as if it were a bamboo.

I climb about 30 metres up, about the height of a Ferris wheel! I wear a *peconha*, which is a loop of rope to support my feet on the trunk, and I have a machete tied to my shorts. Climbing the açai tree is a very cool adventure. It takes strength, a little bit of courage and coordinated feet, to be able to hug the tree and swing along with it.



I've always wanted to climb, but my father only just started letting me do it. He taught me not to climb old trunks because they might be rotten, to always keep my eye on a good bunch while I'm making my way there and, mainly, to look carefully at the foot of the tree before climbing to see if there are any snakes. Here we get a lot of jararaca, surucucu and coral snakes... but we just have to not mess with them and they don't bother us.

I do other things for fun besides picking açai. I love going with my sisters to the river that runs in front of our house, and swinging on the huge swing that we tie to the branches. We swing way up high and land straight in the river. Water is everything in this hot weather! We don't even have hot water showers because we don't need them.

Do you know what my dream is? I really want to work in theatre and dance. And I am already training. The other day we made a film to post on the Internet and I played the role of Matinta Pereira. People laughed a lot when I imitated the witch's scream. I think I have potential.







MARCOS GUSTAVO,  
9 YEARS OLD

# OLD COW

*São Caetano de Odivelas,  
Pará*







I am Marcos and I was born on the coast of Pará, in a town called São Caetano de Odivelas.

One of my favorite things to do here is to go into the mangroves to catch crab. We cover ourselves with mud, which protects us from mosquitoes, and off we go. We walk over the roots, taking care not to slip. Then we set the trap with a piece of wood and a nylon string and wait for the crab to come out of its burrow. The wire attaches to its legs and that's it: it's in the bag! Some people rip their legs off so they don't risk getting pinched. I feel sorry for them, so I leave them whole and come back with them fighting inside the bucket.



Since I was three years old I have dreamed of having a *cabeçudo*, a big-head mask. I liked those big-headed masks from Odivelas so much that I used to walk around with a supermarket basket on top of my head. On my fifth birthday I finally got a real paper mâché big-head, made with *miriti* wood splints and paper from a cement bag glued with tapioca starch. I was so excited! The big-head was the size of my whole body, all painted like Spiderman. To this day we keep it in the corner of the living room at home as if it were a trophy. Now that I've grown up a little, I have a new pink big-head mask, with nicely trimmed hair, beard and mustache.

I wait the whole year for the moment when fireworks announce the Vaca Velha (Old Cow) parade. That's when I get to put on my big-head and go out into the street to celebrate with my friends.

Vaca Velha is an old legend. They say that she was a little old black cow who was loved very much on the farm where she lived, in the enchanted countryside around here. She was watched over by several cowboys, but one day, she disappeared, which made everyone very sad.

Years later, a group of children disguised themselves as adults and decided they would find the Old Cow no matter what. They went way into the mangroves for so long that by the time they came back with the cow in their boat, Odivelas had already become a city.

Since then, every June, and also during Carnival, we have a Vaca Velha parade. Sometimes she's so gentle you can even pet her. Other times, she gets angry and starts jumping all over the place - she even grows bigger! It all depends on the music the band is playing. It can be a march, or frevo, or even rock.







The cowboys keep trying to lasso the cow, but it's not easy.

On the day of the party, the little cow roams the streets, going from house to house, knocking on doors. And we follow her. The idea is to dance non-stop. I can cross my legs and twist around like a screw.

There's also the fight of the *cabeçudos*. It's a festival of head bumping!

It's all in good fun, but it's not easy to do. You can't see properly, because your eyes only have a little hole to look through, and it gets so hot inside that head! But I don't mind. I was born to be a big-head.

Some friends prefer to go out as a Pierrot, the big-nosed clown. And there are also the *buchudos*, who dress up as ghosts and scarecrows to scare people, but never really do.

It's a really fun party.

And then all of a sudden the cow disappears and only comes back again the following year.

So the only thing left to do is go back to catching crab and wait for another year to come.








FRANCIELE,  
10 YEARS OLD

# MILK OF THE FOREST

*Chico Mendes Extractive Reserve,  
Xapuri, Acre*







**i**f there's one thing that makes me happy, it's walking through the woods with my father.

We go out to hunt and fish, tap rubber, and plant corn and yuca in the fields. Sometimes we spend the whole day there. The forest teaches us so many things.

As my father always says, we have to pay attention all the time. The last time we were walking through the forest we saw a jaguar footprint. Even with the rain coming down, we could clearly see the imprint from the toe pads of its paws.

On the forest floor you can see the paths of all the animals – *queixada*, *porco-do-mato* (peccaries, or wild pigs), tapirs – and also their burrows. The *paca* (a type of large rodent) burrow is tiny, but the armadillo's is so huge it can even fit a person.

There are also the ants. Sometimes a whole army of them pass by. They march on, grabbing everything in their way. There's no way you can stop in the middle of their path, otherwise they start climbing up your legs and some of them have a bite that really hurts. A bite from a *tucandeira* ant hurts for the whole day; it gets swollen and even gives you a fever.

And then there are the *micuins* (a kind of tick), *piuns* (a kind of black fly) and *carapanãs* (a kind of mosquito). We always have to wear boots and long pants because of all the insects. But there's no defence against the *carapanãs*: they can bite you even through your clothes.

The only thing I'm really afraid of is meeting up with the *Mapinguari*, a giant, hairy creature with one eye on its forehead and its mouth in its belly button. It walks through the forest screaming, breaking branches and knocking down trees. They say that he only runs away when he sees a sloth.






My friend Ana says it's just a fairy tale. And she comforts me by saying that even if it exists, it only attacks mean hunters. But I would really like to have a pet sloth. I'd set it over the backpack on my back and then I could walk in peace.

On our walks through the forest I get to play by hanging from vines, jumping in the springs, and balancing on trunks, like those gymnastics athletes we see in the Olympics. When my younger brothers and sisters go with us, that's when things get really rowdy!

My father only gets mad with our games when we go hunting. Then we have to be quiet so we don't scare away the animals we're hunting. We just stay still, watching, and listening to the singing of cicadas and the hooting of owls.







Sometimes we go into the forest to get latex from the rubber trees.

My father told me that the rubber tree is the mother of Acre. And the latex is her milk. Then it turns into rubber, tires, tennis shoes soles and a lot of other things.

Besides being a hunter, fisherman and singer in a forró band, my father is also a rubber tapper. To tap rubber you need artistic talent. You have to make several diagonal cuts in the trunk of the tree so that it can bleed properly, without hurting the tree. Then it starts to drip, like a spout, over the *segepê*, which is the little pot tied to the bottom of the cut. In two or three hours, the *segepê* fills right up.

My father says that the rubber tappers learned this technique from Indigenous people who lived here, many, many years ago.

Every time I use an eraser to erase some mistake in my notebook, I wonder where it might have come from. Maybe it came from a rubber tree that I cut?









A young girl with long dark hair is sitting in a small wooden boat on a river. The water is a deep blue color. The girl is looking towards the right side of the frame. The boat is in the center-left of the image. The background is a vast expanse of water with some ripples. The overall mood is somber and reflective.

KEICY GRAZIELE,  
12 YEARS OLD

# A RIVER OF TEARS

*Oiapoque, Amapá*



**M**y name is Keicy. I live in Oiapoque, the farthest town in the North of Brazil. It's where people from many different places meet. You hear many languages spoken on the street: French, Spanish, Creole, as well as the native languages, Arawak and Karib.

The word Oiapoque means "river of the big snake", and the origin of the name comes from a very sad story...

Many years ago, there was a village near here whose people suffered many epidemics.

In that village there was a girl named Tarumã who was pregnant and became a widow. She decided to get away from all the disease and find a better place to raise her *curumim*, her little one.

She asked the God Tupã to turn her into a snake, so she could make her way easily through the forest and find an ideal place to build a new home.

Tupã felt sorry for the girl and granted her wish. And so Tarumã the snake found a very beautiful valley with water, fruits, animals, and good soil for planting. She gave birth there to a beautiful girl. She was so happy that she decided to return to tell her brothers the news. But she forgot to ask Tupã to undo the spell.









The warriors were frightened when they saw a giant snake with a child attached to its body, so they attacked, thinking it was witchcraft.

Tarumã didn't get hit because her scales were too thick. But her little girl was hit by an arrow and died. Tarumã's snake eyes cried so much that from them flowed a huge river of tears, the Oiapoque River. Then she dived in and fled to its depths, where she lives to this day. Sometimes she cries and floods all the nearby islands. And the river she cried became what is the last border of Brazil - or the first one, depending on where you come from and where you're going.

On the other side of the bridge is French Guiana, which belongs to France. In a way, we can say that we border France.

Our school has a really cool mix of people. We have Indigenous children, Cubans, Haitians, Venezuelans... and everybody gets along well. There are also children who go to school hungry - for them the only meal of the day is the school lunch.

At least they have a delicious lunch: risotto, *vatapá* (shrimp stew), *maniçoba* (meat stew), *carne na chapa* (pan-grilled meat), *tacacá* (a kind of soup), *caipira* (home-style) chicken and even a *macaxeira* (cassava) cake.

My dream is to go with my school friends to Macapá, which is the capital of my state, Amapá. We would love to play *queimada* (dodgeball) in Zerão stadium. It's a soccer field with a unique feature: the Equator, the line that separates the world in two parts, goes right through the middle of it. We've even named the teams. It will be "Tudo em Cima" (On Top of the World) against "Baixo" (Down Under). And I will play for "Tudo em Cima", of course!

Our teacher told us that it's a very long way to get to Macapá: an entire day on a dirt road, with lots of ruts and mud puddles in the road to get through, and lots of wooden bridges.

Too bad that Oiapoque also has a sad side: there is a lot of mining around the town, which ruins the rivers and springs and destroys everything around it.

I look forward to the day when Tarumã gets tired of just crying and starts protecting all the children here.









HOMERO,  
8 YEARS OLD

# THE DELTA

*Afuá, Pará*







I was lucky to be born here in Afuá. The town has this name because a long time ago, someone saw a dolphin coming up to breathe and he let out his squirt, making the sound “fua, fua, fua”.

This is the mouth of the biggest river in the world. This is where the Amazon River meets the sea, creating the *pororoca*, the churning of the waves.

The Amazon River is so wide that from some parts of it we can't even see the other shore. And it's so long from end to end that it's even longer than the distance from Brazil to Portugal!

They say that this is the most beautiful city in the world. I don't know if it's because of the colourful houses all stuck together, or if it's because of the *jambo* trees, which make everything look like a pink carpet.





And then there is the river. When it floods, it goes right under our houses. That's why they have tall skinny legs. When the water takes over everything like this, it seems as if the house is floating.

Once a year there is the high tide, during flooding season. Everything is flooded and we don't even go to school. It's a party! It lasts about three days and everybody goes out to have fun, splash around and kick their legs in the water. On those days we have to hang everything up inside the house so nothing gets wet: toys, clothes and sometimes even the refrigerator!

In Afuá there's no traffic or pollution. The only noise is from boat engines and the loudspeakers playing *technobrega* ("techno tacky"). Cars and motorcycles are not allowed; we do everything by bicycle. Everybody here is born pedaling a bike, and everybody has fallen off their bike at least once. It's just the first fall that's scary.

I always go to school by bike. And also to my grandmother's stationery store, where I stay while my mother gives English lessons. I love doing puzzles on the floor in the store. At the moment I am in the middle of doing one of Pinocchio, with 80 pieces.







I like riding to the other side of the island to fly kites with my pals, in the late afternoon when it gets cooler. And let me tell you, my kite is the craziest of all: it spins like mad and lands like a stingray.

I also really like talking to my grandfather, listening to his stories and learning amazing things. He even taught me how to put a whole egg inside a bottle without breaking it! He always tells me to follow my dreams. And I have lots of them, but the biggest one is to be a scientist and travel around the world. I want to go all the way to Japan. I have started studying hard for this. And Japan is far away... from here to there are probably two and a half Amazon rivers! But I am sure that one day I will get there.









A young boy, shirtless and wearing dark shorts, stands on a narrow canoe in a river. He is holding a large, rectangular fishing net that is spread out over the water. The scene is illuminated by the warm, golden light of a sunset, with the sun's reflection shimmering on the water's surface. The background shows a dense forest of trees along the riverbank.

ELIVALDO,  
11 YEARS OLD

# CANOE SKATER

*Novo Airão, Amazonas*





**M**y canoe is my skateboard. It's also called "casquinho" because it was made from a part of a tree trunk, just right for one person.

I carry it around everywhere and I can balance and do the most extreme moves. Nothing knocks me down. I stand on the bow, even upside down, without ever falling.

I go swerving around the trees in the Vai Quem Quer stream with my little 'shell' boat until I get to the Negro River and then I can sail like a ship.

Every day I do the same thing: row, row, row, very early in the morning, for half an hour, until I get to my school in Renascer.

One of the first things I hear when I leave home are the howler monkeys screaming and jumping through the trees. They make such a big racket! And then there's the happy sound of all the birds singing in the sun.

Without getting out of my boat, I can even pick guava on the way, to go with the egg tapioca and *mugunzá* (corn porridge) that my mother always makes when I wake up.





Sometimes I start hearing strange noises on the way, like bubbles in the water. I just wait and I know that water will squirt out.

It's the pink dolphins. There are always three of them, who I guess are brothers. I named them Huguinho, Zezinho and Luisinho. They always keep me company, racing ahead and playing in front of me.

Sometimes it does happen that I see the bubbles but the dolphins don't show up. I wonder if it isn't Yara, the mermaid that feeds on people here. My father has already warned me that if she shows up, it's better to turn your face away and cover your ears, so that you don't end up in her belly at the bottom of the river.







One day my grandmother became ill. She has a problem with her blood pressure and she almost fainted. There was nobody at home; everybody had gone fishing. I didn't know what to do. I ended up taking our *rabeta*, which is a boat with a really noisy motor, and braved the big river so I could take my grandmother to the hospital in Novo Airão.

My heart was racing. To complicate things, I had to deal with some really rough water: waves going up and down, the water pulling and rocking the boat. It was like a thunderstorm.

It was a long trip but I kept going the right way. My grandmother always says that it was my knowledge of the river that saved her life.







MARIA VITÓRIA, 10 YEARS OLD

# QUEEN VICTORIA WATER LILY

*Abaetetuba, Pará*







I live on one of the 72 islands that are part of Abaetetuba, which is known as the world capital of toys made from a palm tree called *miriti*.

I spend my days watching my uncles make the toys and helping paint them once they're ready.

The hardest one to paint is the jaguar. The jaguar, of all things! I think God was very creative. I always wonder if he painted the black spots first or the golden part.

My name is Maria Vitória. At school, some people call me Victoria Regia, because of a legend from here.

They say that a long time ago an Indigenous woman drowned trying to kiss the reflection of the moon in the river. She thought she would become a star in heaven, but the goddess Jaci decided to turn her into a water star. And that's what happened. She became a beautiful aquatic plant with a perfumed flower that only opens at night and turns pink at sunrise.





I like to think that I am a star.

At home, nobody calls me Victoria. My grandfather called me Pereminha. Grandpa was so playful that the birds used to play on his head when he gave them bananas first thing in the morning. He was like a father to me. He took care of me since I was a little girl. He never deprived me of anything. He bought my clothes, my school supplies, he even bought me a Lady Bug doll!

But the present I like the most is the canoe that he had made for me in my size, with the hull painted purple and the sides my favorite colour: pink. And he also had my nickname painted on it: Pereminha.





He taught me that I shouldn't go to the other side of the river with my canoe because it's too far. So I stay on this side, playing with the *tralhoto* fish. They have four eyes and are very funny. Even though the canoe is tiny, I can stand upright in it, bending my legs so it doesn't rock. One day my mom tried to get up with me and the canoe capsized. It was total chaos.

Now I am very sad, because I will never hear my grandfather call me Pereminha again. He left us two weeks ago, right on the night before my tenth birthday. He became a star in the sky - or, who knows, maybe a water star?









MAYKAWÁ, 9 YEARS OLD

# THE SOURCE OF EVERYTHING

*Altamira, Pará*





**A**t the beginning of time, the God Senã'ã took one long breath and created the Volta Grande do Xingu (Big Bend of the Xingu River), one of the places with the biggest variety of plants and animals. Lots of macaws live there, with their incredible combination of colours, and there's a huge river.

God Senã'ã also created our people to live in the Volta Grande: the Yudjá, or Juruna in the language of white people.

We are the people of the river; we use canoes instead of our feet.

For many generations we lived happily and in peace with nature. No one worried about food. There were all kinds of fish to catch whenever we wanted: *pacu*, *tucunaré*, *matrinchã*, *curimatã* and *piranha*. And plenty of coconuts and nuts.

My name is Maykawá Juruna. I am nine years old. I was born in the village of Miratu, on Paquiçamba land.

When I was only one year old, the world ended. Suddenly the river shrank. There were more stones left in the river than water. The trees became sad; some began to die. The fish and other animals became weak and sick.





All this happened because of a power plant that was built around here. For it to work, it needs a lot of water from the river, which was our source of life.

With the river getting drier, it became hard to navigate. And we don't eat very many fish anymore: nobody knows if the water is contaminated.

It's the people from the power plant who decide how much water is dammed and how little stays in the river.

My mother is always worried, because once the people from the power plant opened the floodgates without warning and a lot of water came at once. We almost all ended up at the bottom of the river.

Every night before going to sleep I pray that Senã'ã will breathe another magical breath and the Big Bend of the Xingu will be reborn ...









RAYENE, 8 YEARS OLD

# MARAMBIRÉ PRINCESS

*Quilombo do Silêncio, Óbidos, Pará*





**T**his is the community called Silence, which is not silent at all. We are the noisy ones, that's for sure!

When I say "we", I mean me and my gang of friends: Valeria, Ana and Cleicimar, whom we call Dear.

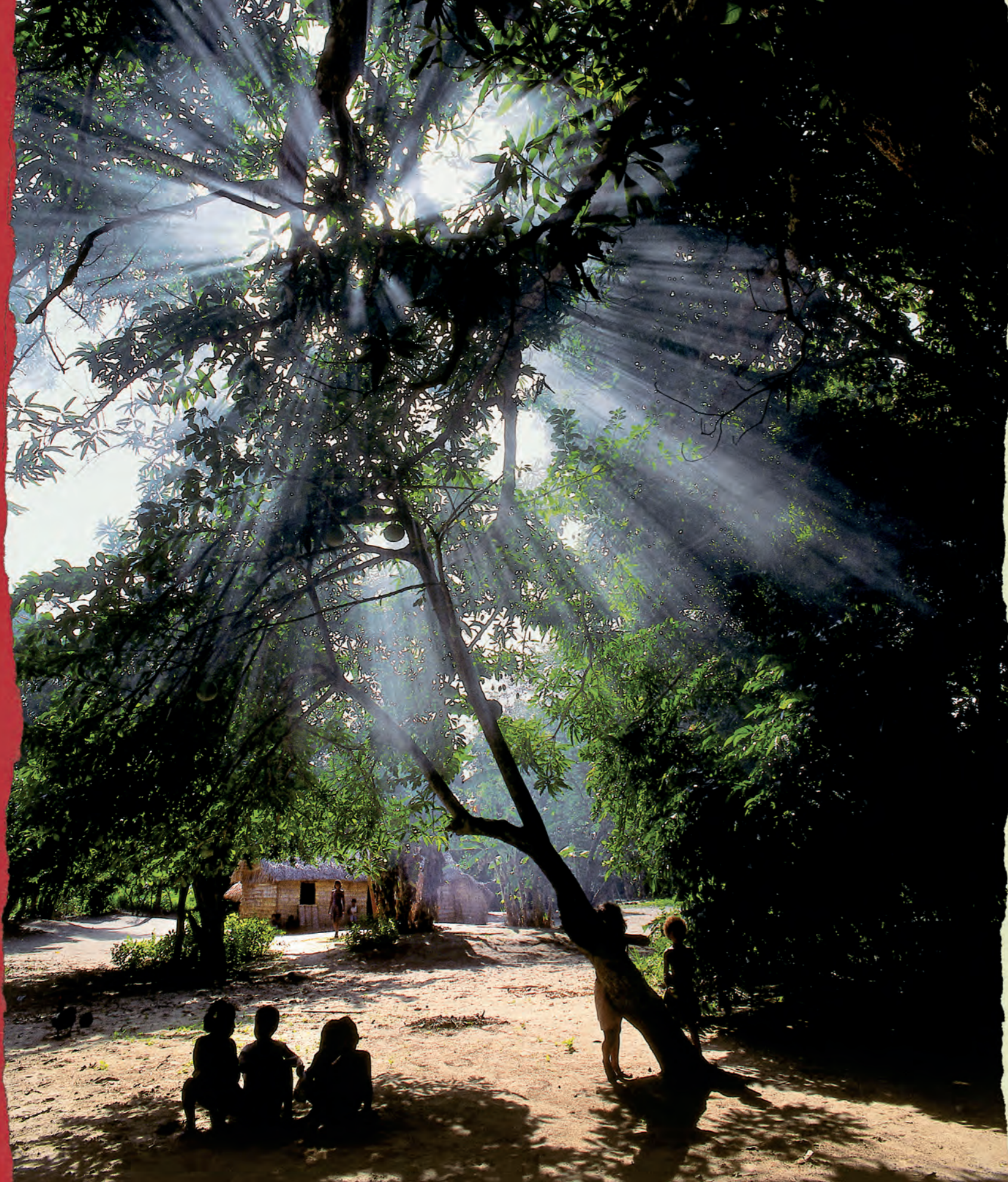
There are also my three pet pigs: Fofushca, Mimosa and Cinderella, or Cindi, who is the biggest and the most fun. You just have to grab a vine and she comes running after us!

We like playing volleyball and we love playing *bole-bole*. But instead of pebbles, we play with *mucajá* seeds.

If there is one strange tree around here it's the *guaraná* tree. When you drink a *guaraná* soft drink you can't imagine that the tree has fruit that looks like eyes staring at you. There's an old legend that says that the fruit is like that because a long time ago a boy who was bitten by a snake died in the middle of the forest and his distraught mother decided to plant one of his eyes so he would never stop seeing the world.







We also love dancing. There's the TikTok hand dance, the *quadrilha* (square dance) at the Midsummer celebration, and also the *marambiré*, which came from our African relatives and honours the former slave that became Saint Benedict.

The main characters of the *marambiré* party are the King and Queen of Congo. Everybody dances and sings to sounds of the fiddle, guitar, tambourine and bass drum. At the end of the party everyone goes to the edge of the river, gets into a boat and sails along the same routes the old people took to escape from slavery.

Last year, on Black Awareness Day, there was a "Miss" beauty contest at school. One girl said she was going to go dressed as Beyoncé. I really wanted to participate, but in a different way.

One day, my grandmother, whom I also call my mother, asked me why I was sad. When I told her it was because I didn't have any ideas for the contest, she performed a miracle: she wrapped me in a silk cloth, which turned into a beautiful dress, she did my hair with a colourful bow, and put earrings and a necklace on me that belonged to my great-grandmother.

She said: "You are going to be the princess of the Marambiré Congado". I loved the idea of being the daughter of the Queen of





the Congada. But there was another problem: the contest rules were very challenging. Besides knowing how to walk gracefully, you had to show confidence, friendliness and beauty.

I asked my grandmother: "How do you do that? She said I just had to be myself.

In the end I walked with my eyes closed - I mean, I can't even remember how I walked, I was so nervous.

The best part was when they announced the winner on the school's loudspeaker: "Rayene dos Santos". My friends came right over and hugged me, saying: "Long live the Princess of Marambiré! Even my little pigs had a party.









ANA LUÍSA, 9 YEARS OLD

# MIRACLE OF NAZARÉ

*Vigia, Pará*







I am like a fruit that was born still green, a little earlier than expected. I must have been in a hurry to be born. My lungs were not quite ready yet, so I came into the world hanging by a thread.

My mother actually made a promise: if I got well, she would follow the Círio procession for the rest of her life. And so that's how it is: every year my mother follows the Círio de Nazaré procession. And I love going with her.

I love those colourful umbrellas covering the sky, and the people following along underneath them, full of faith.

Our Lady of Nazareth was the protector of the Portuguese sailors. They always carried an image of the Virgin. They say that one of the statues got lost and was found in a nearby creek by a man named Plácido, who took it home. But when he woke up the next day, the saint was gone. He went back to that creek and found the saint again. He took the statue back home, but it always disappeared, and he always found it again in that same place.





Plácido finally surrendered to the miracle and decided to build a chapel in the creek where she kept being reborn. The news spread and the place became a kind of destination for pilgrims. That's how the Círio began, more than 300 years ago.

People from all over go there to make wishes, fulfill a vow, or just to give thanks. Some follow the pilgrimage route barefoot. Others carry little houses on their heads or crosses on their backs. They dress like angels and try their best to get a place to hold on to the long rope that connects the people with the Divine.

My sacred place is my backyard. It's the same place my mother played in when she was a child. When I go to the city, I can't even stand it for a second. I always just want to come right back home and take care of my plants. There is cacao, açai, coffee, *araçá* (araza, a fruit like guava), pear, papaya, *bacaba* (Turu palm fruit), *andiroba* (crabwood fruit), *jambo* (a kind of apple), coconut, avocado, *pupunha* (peach palm fruit), mango and lemon - a huge family!





I like spending time in the orchard, down where the river flows. It's my very own creek. A real joy! I cool off there when it's hot, or I play by myself and pretend I'm a mermaid. I live at the bottom of the sea and have powers to protect animals against the hunters that run around all over the place. And I can make things levitate with the power of my thoughts. So I can rain stones down on my enemies.

I'm as fast as Wonder Woman. I leap from the tree with a vine and run up the trunk that's like a bridge across the stream. The *saimiri* monkeys always keep me company.

Curupira (a mythical creature) also hangs around here. I've heard his whistling. But I'm not afraid of him, even though he looks scary, with his fiery hair and his feet on backwards. He's my fellow soldier. He protects the forest, I protect my backyard, and the Virgin of Nazareth protects all of us.









DAVI, 12 YEARS OLD

# DAVI, THE FISHERMAN

*Ajuruteua, Pará*







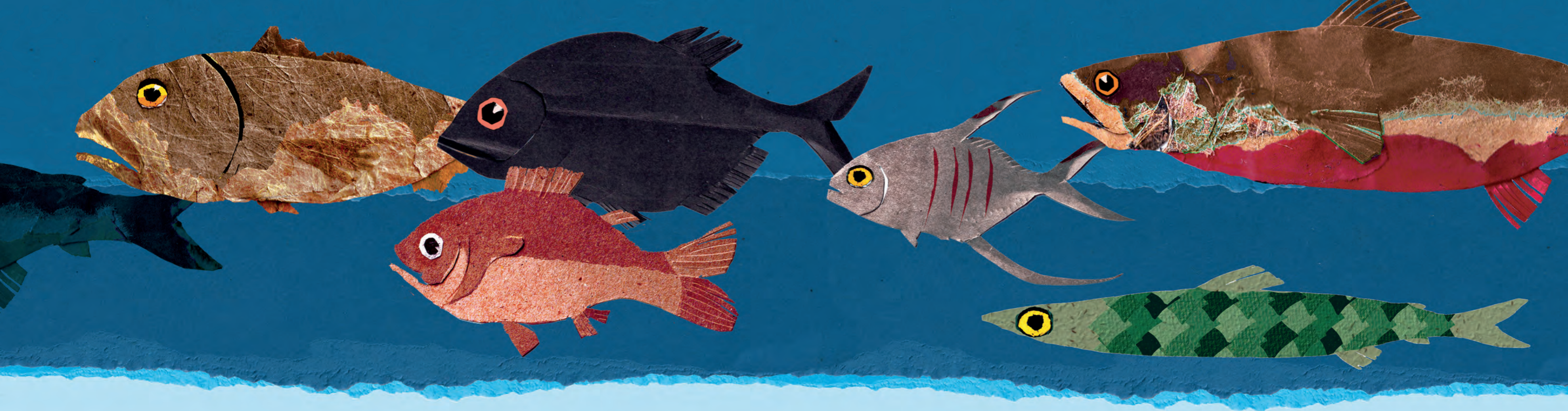
here I was born there is so much sea that we even forget there is a forest surrounding us. Ever since I can remember, I would sleep snuggled up under the prow of a canoe with my sisters.

My village is called Ajuruteua. It has this name because of all the sweet *ajuru* trees around here. Almost every day we play ball and go fishing. And almost every night there's a bonfire and we dance *carimbó*.

Everybody here lives off fishing. There are so many fish in the sea that you would need to recite the whole alphabet more than once with their names.

The most famous ones are: catfish, *pratiqueira* (Curuma mullet), *curuca* (whitemouth croaker), stonefish, *tibiro* (leatherjacket), and *uritinga*, *pacamão*, *bandeirado* and *uricica* (kinds of catfish). My favorites are mullet and hake – especially mixed with açaí.





In almost every house there's always some fishing net hanging from the clotheslines. There are many types of nets. The most common is the *tarrafa*, which is a very large circle with lead weights tied around it. There is also the *espinhel*, with many hooks, and also the *rede pro corral*, which is a trap mounted on wooden stakes where the fish go in and then cannot escape.

Nobody goes hungry here. There is a very beautiful traditional festival here, which we call the Quial. During the Quial, whoever catches a lot of fish offers them for free to those who have caught very little or none at all. During the Quial we are united as one.

I've learned many secrets of the sea from my father, Ageu, and from other fishermen. I've also learned a lot from the sea itself.

Once, my father went out in a small boat for a deep-sea fishing trip with his friends that lasted three weeks.

He fished all day and slept on the boat. I was almost sick from missing him and worrying about him. He came back from his trip with a beard and a boat full of fish. After that he promised me he would never again stay away so long. Today he only goes fishing in the reefs close to home, and I go with him whenever I can.

At the end of the day when we're done fishing, we like to dance the *carimbó*, with lots of drums, flute, tambourine and the *reco-reco* (a percussion instrument).

The girls decorate their hair with flowers and wear colourful skirts. The boys invite them to dance by going up to them and clapping their hands. Everyone is barefoot and it's great fun.

When I get back home I'm tired and all I can think of is getting my energy back with a great big plate of mullet.



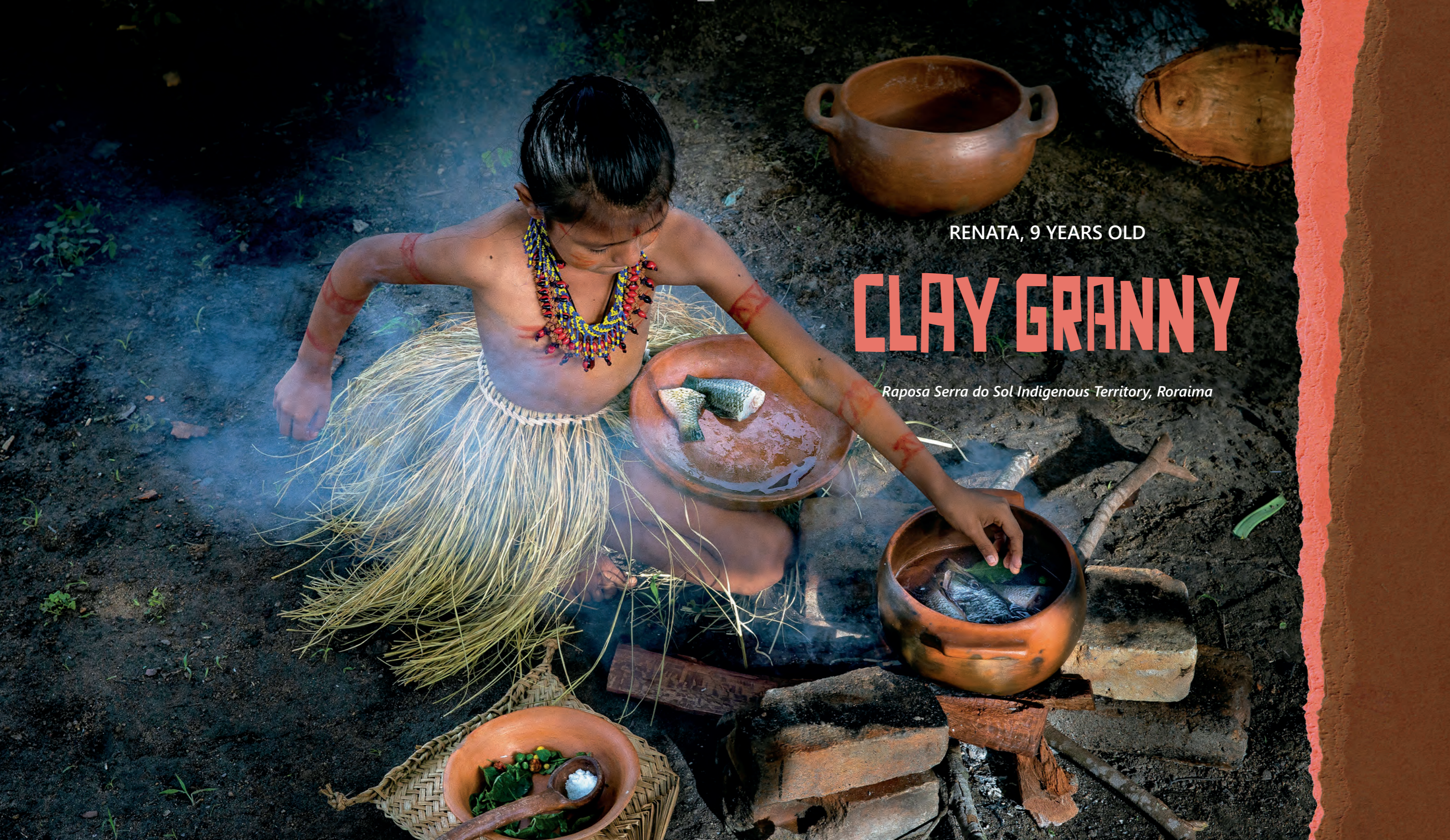




RENATA, 9 YEARS OLD

# CLAY GRANNY

*Raposa Serra do Sol Indigenous Territory, Roraima*







**T**he sun and the moon were in love, but they were sad because they could never see each other. It was a hopeless love affair.

It was then that Mother Nature decided to bring the two together, giving us the eclipse. That's how Makunaima was born, son of the Sun and the Moon, who grew up to become a warrior and guardian of the Tree of Life. The tree gave all kinds of fruit that only he could harvest and give out.

But not everything was perfect. Over time, some people, overcome by desire, climbed the tree, cut down the fruit, and took several seedlings to give birth to other Trees of Life.

Makunaima was furious and cut the trunk in half. Its crown fell and an immense forest grew around it. The trunk is still in the same place today and is called Mount Roraima.



That is how my people, the Macuxis, were born.

The grandmother of the Macuxis is called Vovó Barro (Clay Granny), Ko Ko Non in our language. She is the owner of the earth and of everything that comes from it. So we always ask for her help and protection.

My mother has talked to her. That was last year, when we went with Aunt Lilibeth and her friends to the foot of the mountain to get some clay to make our pots.

My sister Ana and I were the only children who went. I don't think I will ever forget that day. It was quite an adventure... starting with all the preparation. They used a piece of coconut shell to rub chili pepper powder blessed by the shaman into their eyes. They all started coughing and no one could open their eyes for about five minutes. I was so scared. But I got over it. It seems that tears are good for cleaning everything out, to make us see better and be less lazy. Everyone was really excited!







Then there was the *urucum* (fruit used for painting on skin). My sister and I rubbed it on each other. We had fun rubbing it on our arms, our legs, our faces.

And then we all prayed to Vovó Barro to protect us from from the sun and from the evil spirits of the forest.

It was still early in the morning. My mom explained some rules before starting our walk: if anyone was sad, it was better not to go at all, so that Granny Clay wouldn't get angry. No one was allowed to get hungry, so we all took cassava flour porridge. And Ana and I were supposed to be very quiet when we got there.

It was quite a hike! We went up and down the mountain, through paths full of rocks. We found some shade and stopped for a snack of some red cashews with *paçoca de carne* (ground meat dish), which I love - I can eat *paçoca de carne* all day.

Suddenly, Aunt Lilibeth shouted, "Look at that: it's Grandma's poop!".

There were several firm, reddish coloured balls.

They looked like small stones.

Then we arrived at the ravine, near the pit, where we started slowly digging the earth with the pickaxes we had brought. Very slowly, without making a noise; everyone silent.

It was time to talk to Grandma. If someone doesn't do it properly, or doesn't ask her permission, they can get sick and get a fever...

Mother took the baked fish out of a little cloth bag and put it on the edge of the ravine. "Grandma, I brought this fish for you to eat with this handful of tobacco." Mother also took a *muriú*, which is a fine, colorful piece of cloth, and offered it to her.

I think Granny Clay liked us. We all came back home with heavy sacks full of red clay.

There will be no shortage of pots at home.











SAMUEL, 11 YEARS OLD

# FLOATING HOUSE

*Manaus, Amazonas*





Manaus is a big city, but every once in a while it remembers that it's a forest. Nobody believed it when the other day an alligator appeared outside my school. An alligator!

A big one. It was a huge deal. Everyone made a party out of it and took selfies. Oleana even went to kiss it. But only until the 'gator opened its huge mouth to yawn.

I think he was just relaxing, but everybody got scared and people were running everywhere. It took a bunch of firemen to rescue the animal and take it back to the creek.

I love my school. Especially the library. There are so many books there that I love. One of them is a book with pictures of the forest. I'm amazed by all the green and the beautiful rivers. Those pictures make me dream. It doesn't seem like it's the same place as here, in this maze of people, where the creek is not a creek, it's a sewer.



I also really enjoy reading about the legends of the forest. My favourite is the one about the *uirapuru*. It tells the story of a warrior who played the flute beautifully. So beautifully that whoever heard his music fell in love. All the girls wanted to be his wife, but he only had eyes for the village chief's daughter. The problem was that she was already engaged to marry someone else. The flutist didn't pay attention and kept charming the girl, and she ended up running away with him.

The chief was furious and decided to shoot the boy with his arrow. The moment he launched the arrow, the warrior turned into a bird and flew away.

This bird is called the *uirapuru*, and it has the most beautiful song in the forest. When it sings, all the other birds and everyone else falls silent to listen.

Another book I love is about a boy who had no friends. Until the day a storm came and he hugged his pillow tight. Suddenly, the pillow started talking to him... and they talked until the rain stopped. After that day, every night, before going to sleep, they would chat, and before they knew it, they would fall asleep and dream together. They became best friends.







The saddest day of my life was when I saw the rain wash away our house. I was coming back from school and the ground was already soft. When I arrived, in the middle of a storm, I saw the house all tilted. Then a big current came, hit the brace and everything fell apart. First the kitchen went down; then the whole house floated away.

My father and my uncles still managed to get a few things out. But my bed and my video game were gone forever.

At first, I was mad at everything. I didn't talk to people for days. I was only happy again when my father was able to build a new house.

He always tells me that life will get better. The house is nice, and I have my own little room. But it's also on the hillside, like the other one. So I am always afraid, just like the dogs, when I hear thunder. At times like these, I hug my pillow and imagine the *uirapuru* singing.











## THE CHILDREN

Ana Luísa dos Santos Nunes, Ariwalu Kamayurá, Davi Mescouto Melo, Elivaldo Cavalcante Ribeiro,  
Franciele Silva Pereira, Homero de Moura Gonçalves, Keicy Grazielle Costa Gomes,  
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Thayse Luma Santos and Wanderley dos Santos Garcia

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE TEAM AT C6 BANK:

Alex Brito, Alexandra Paim, Marcos Massukado and Marina Mancini









**Children's Amazon** evolved from several trips throughout the North Region of Brazil. It reveals the daily life and dreams of fifteen children as seen through the lens of photographer Araquém Alcântara, with illustrations by Angelo Abu and text by Morris Kachani. These are stories that honour and respect the harmonious coexistence between humans and nature. From Xingu to Oiapoque, from Xapuri to Afuá, from Ajuruteua to Abaetetuba, the realities of these kids embody the importance of keeping the forest alive. This is the only way a secure future for them – and the planet – can be guaranteed.

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