

## Chapter 3

It took four hours to drive only 85 kilometers, which is about 53 miles or like driving from San Clemente to San Diego which takes about an hour back home in Southern California. It rained on and off making the already muddy road very slick and slippery. We got stuck a few times as the tires disappeared into thick pools of mud that lay disguised in the darkening forest road. Tiago and Dad were covered in mud and looked quite tired by the time we reached the small shack and pier on the Jamirir River. The shack was very weathered, old grey wooden planks, with one window and a door that creaked when you opened it, but right now it looked like a palace to me. The forest seemed to cradle the small shack as if it merely allowed it to exist but for a short while. All sorts of noises that I could not quite identify surrounded the small shack but I was too sleepy from all of the excitement worry about it and fell fast asleep the moment I laid down.

It wasn't even morning's first light when I felt Dad gently kiss my forehead and tell me it was time to board the river boat.

An explorer's life is exhausting, I thought to myself. Although my mind wanted to obey my



eyes just wouldn't cooperate! So I dragged myself out of the hammock which served as my bed and splash some cold water on my face to help me find the new day. With my pink backpack on my back I joined Tiago

and Dad out on the dock. We were on our way to the mouth of the Tucano River where we would then set out on foot to explore the forest.

It would take us two days to reach our destination. The boat showed many years on the river with weathered white paint that cracked in areas showing the aging wood beneath. It had plenty of room inside the cabin with a small table which we would use to eat and convert to a desk between meals, long benches with cushions on them for sitting and sleeping and even a small sink with filtered water for drinking and washing. We cooked our dinners out in the open air on a small hibachi in the back of the boat. The stars were so many at night that I could not count them and the sky so blue it was almost black. Every now and then I wonder how mom was doing and wished she was here too.

To be continued...