

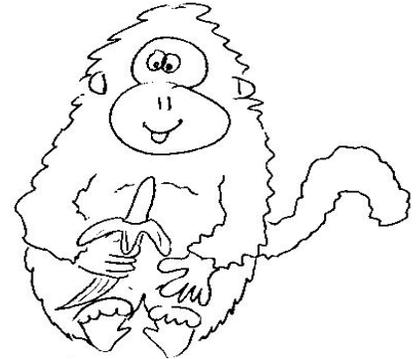
Prisoner of the Monkeys

By Tamara Kula

I am very happy today. Why am I happy? Because today I received a letter from my sister! My sister is named Tanya. She is in Costa Rica this summer studying Spanish.

But when I read her letter, I was not happy. Something very bad happened! Look at her letter – here it is:

*Dear Sister,
I need help! I'm in the jungle and I can't escape.
A group of monkeys captured me and now I am
a prisoner! I have only bananas to eat and I
have to work very hard all day removing insects
from the monkeys' fur. It's terrible! You have to
come save me.
Love, Tanya*



Oh no! My sister is a prisoner of the monkeys in Costa Rica! There is only one thing to do. I bought an airplane ticket and a few hours later I was in Costa Rica. But I was in a city. So where was the jungle?

"Excuse me, can you tell me where the jungle is?" I asked a woman in the street.

"The jungle? It's in the south," she told me.

"Thank you very much!" I said and started to walk.

It was very hot. When I finally arrived at the jungle, I was very thirsty and very tired. But I had to find my sister. Where to start? I saw a very beautiful parrot with bright red, blue, and yellow feathers. I decided to ask him.

"Excuse me, Mr. Parrot," I said, "but have you seen my sister?"

"Hmm... maybe. What does she look like?" responded the parrot.

"Well, she has brown hair and brown eyes and she looks a lot like me."

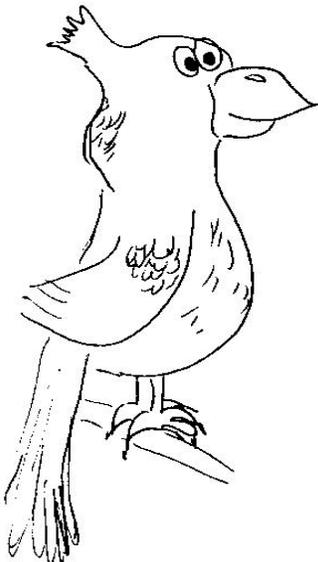
The parrot shook his head. "I haven't seen her, I'm sorry. But you should ask the one who knows everything about the jungle – the serpent."

"And where can I find him?" I asked.

"If you go 14 trees to the left, and then 9 trees to the right, you will be there."

I said thank you and continued through the jungle. The parrot was right, because when I went 14 trees to the left and 9 trees to the right, I saw a serpent hanging from a tree.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Serpent. Have you seen my sister?"



The serpent looked at me and said, "Does she have brown hair and brown eyes and look a lot like you?"

"Yes, that's her!" I exclaimed with happiness.

"Yes, I know where she is. But it will be very difficult to find her because she is in the center of the jungle in the City of the Monkeys," he told me.

"But I must save her! She is the monkeys' prisoner!"

"Then I advise you to ask the jaguar to take you to the center of the jungle. It is very far from here, and the jaguar is much faster than you."

"Where is the jaguar?" I asked.

"Follow this path straight ahead until you see the tree that looks like a monster."

"Thank you!" I said.

"No problem," he responded, "and good luck."

I walked and walked and finally arrived at the tree that looked like a monster. The serpent was right because a jaguar came out of a hole in the tree.

"Good afternoon, Ms. Jaguar," I said to her. "I must find my sister in the heart of the jungle. Can you take me? It's very important."

"Are you crazy?" exclaimed the jaguar. "The heart of the jungle? That's where the monkeys live!"

"Yes, I know. My sister is their prisoner and I have to save her," I explained.

"OK," said the jaguar, "I can take you to the center, but I will not enter their city. From there on, you are on your own."

"OK," I said.

We traveled together through the jungle. I rode on the jaguar's back. A few hours later, it began to get dark. We continued in the darkness for a few more hours. Finally the jaguar stopped. In the distance I could hear monkeys screeching.

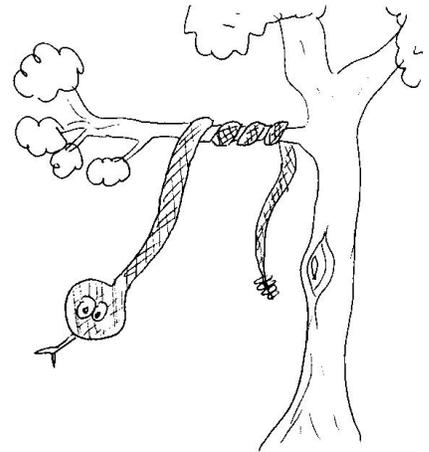
"I stop here. Now you continue alone," the jaguar told me.

"Thank you so much," I said, wanting the jaguar to stay with me.

"Goodbye, and be careful!" said the jaguar, and she disappeared into the trees.

Now what? The only thing to do was to continue in the direction of the sounds. Very soon I could see some lights coming from the City of the Monkeys. The screeching sounds were stronger and louder.

I walked without making any noise. When I came to the edge of the city, I hid behind a tree to think. I had to find my sister!



I looked at the city carefully from my hidden position. The city was up in the trees. I saw some monkeys jumping from tree to tree, screaming, but most of them were sleeping peacefully in groups in the trees. Now was my best chance.

I stayed close to the ground and crawled slowly. If a monkey came too close, I stopped and didn't move. I crossed the city in this way, and suddenly, I saw my sister!

She was in a tree, sleeping in a cage made of branches. I threw a small stick at her to wake her up.

"Mmm... don't do that," she mumbled in her sleep.

"It's me!" I whispered. "Your sister!"

Her eyes flew open. "It's you! You came for me!"

"Shhh!" I said. "We have to escape – don't make any noise."

I climbed the tree and opened the cage. My sister ran to hug me. Then we started to run. Everything went well until we came to the edge of the city. We were about to escape without anyone noticing, but one monkey did see us and started to screech with more force than you can imagine in a little monkey!

"RUN!" I yelled, and both of us burst into running as fast as we could. We left the city with more than 30 monkeys following us. We tried to lose them among the trees, but the monkeys were fast, swinging in the branches.

I was almost ready to give up hope when I saw the jaguar running toward us. "You stayed?!" I exclaimed in disbelief.

"Yes, I decided to wait. Come, come, quickly!"

My sister and I jumped onto the jaguar's back, and a few minutes later, we had left the monkeys far behind in the jungle.

The next day, we said goodbye to the jaguar. "Thank you for everything – without you, we would both be prisoners!" I told her.

"I couldn't leave you all alone," said the jaguar. "Good luck in the United States!"

That is the story of how I saved my sister. Everyone wants to know what happened in Costa Rica, but when we tell them, no one believes us!

