



Rainforest Calling

“Hey, Rodrigo, my feathered friend! I think that this strange one-eye thing might be looking at you. Come and see!”

Me and my big, silly beak! A clever potoo like me should have known better – Rodrigo is a macaw, and no one in the whole forest likes being looked at more than macaws do. Show-offs.

You see, one-eye, my colourful friend doesn't care that you are clinging to our trees and staring at us – Rodrigo just thinks it's another reason for him to pose and show off his bright feathers. Trust me, one-eye, he certainly does not need *another* reason.

“Do you think they like my feathers, Pedro?” he squawks. Which do you think they like best, eh? Yellow? Or maybe blue?”

Sometimes, I think that Rodrigo loves himself way, *way* too much. “Rodrigo, nobody is impressed by your feathers – lots of birds around here have colourful feathers. The whole forest has already seen your bottom far too many times, OK?”

Take my word for it, my new one-eyed compadre, no potoo wants to see a macaw's booty shaking like that,

Rainforest Calling

especially after a breakfast feast of grubs and beetles. It's like watching a wonky rainbow wobbling in a storm, and makes my tummy roll like I've just flapped from the top of the tallest tree to the forest floor. But this potoo will keep his beak shut – those flashy macaws can be so sensitive.

It's just that this forest is full of many things that are so much more beautiful than Rodrigo's feathers. Look at all these leaves and flower petals below us. Do you notice how they shine, and how the raindrops sparkle in the sunlight? Aren't they a delight?

What about the swirly swarms of butterflies under the canopy? They do make tasty snacks, but I like to admire the way they flutter and fly, too. Food that looks as good as it tastes – what can be better than that, huh? Just wait until you go beneath the leaves, one-eye. That's when you'll see those colourful creatures fluttering by, like tiny fragments of a broken rainbow. Every week, I see new colours and patterns.

I wonder what kind of creature you are: a strange new forest animal, perhaps, or a brand new kind of plant... I'm not sure. You're green like the bushes and trees but look at your skin: it's hard and tough like a caiman's tail, and smooth, too, just like a turtle's belly. I am one puzzled potoo because you don't have any legs or wings

Rainforest Calling

or even a beak, and I haven't seen you walk or crawl or fly yet. In fact, all you ever do is sit there on a tree like a lazy, sleeping sloth – just not nearly as pretty, huh?

Hello?

Has the jaguar got your tongue? Do you even know that I'm here? You're not even looking at me, one-eye. All you do is look this way, then the other way.

Hello?

Wait! Of course! I know why you can't see me. How foolish of me – I am Pedro the potoo! And potoos are *masters of disguise*.



Rainforest Calling

It's true! Clever birds like Pedro can vanish from view in one flap of a hummingbird's wing, or sit in the same place for hours without **ever** being seen. I'd like to see one of those flashy 'look-at-me' macaws try to do that, huh? Let's face it, you could see Rodrigo with your eyes closed – and in this forest, if you're easy to see, you're an easy-to-catch meal for those sharp-toothed predators.

Rodrigo lives up here in the tops of the tallest trees, where it's windy and wet and there are fewer hungry predators – comprende? Macaws don't like being reminded that they're scaredy-birds, though. So Rodrigo tells me that he stays up here **only** because he can crack the Brazil nuts with his beak and gobble them with his special tongue. (Typical. Macaws like him think that everything about them is special.)

Personally, I think that it's far too wet and windy up here for a little bird like me to fly. It's dazzlingly hot, too – probably because there's nothing above us to hide us from the sun up here in the tallest trees.

Trees! Of course, that's why you're here – to look at all the wonderful, magnificent forest trees. Aren't they amazing? They seem to stretch on forever, following our beautiful river as far as the eye can see. You can't have a forest without trees – without trees, where would birds

Rainforest Calling

like me sleep? Where could I perch, out of reach of the nasties creeping around the forest floor? Where would Rodrigo get his tasty nuts from? And where would **you** be, one-eye?

Hey, do you want to know what has been ruffling my feathers lately? Something dreadful is happening to our beautiful trees...

They're vanishing!

My forest friends and I think that there are some nasty tree-stealers prowling the forest. Have you seen them, one-eye? One minute, a potoo can be hopping from branch to branch, enjoying the dark and the quiet between the trees; the next, he's blinded by blazing sunlight and deafened by more noise than a troop of angry howler monkeys. It's true! Every day, more of our trees disappear. You don't think that those tree-stealers want to take the **entire** forest, do you?

Rodrigo sometimes says that he thinks that those tree-stealers might not like us birds.

"No more trees means no more birds," he yaks. "We all have to fly away!"

Rainforest Calling

That's crazy talk, right? But my friends and I are scared, one-eye – so scared that birds like Rodrigo have been talking to those fly-away birds (you know, the ones who come here for holidays when it's not so wet). Rodrigo says that he could fly away with them to a new home, far away from our lovely forest.

"Rodrigo can save the macaws, Pedro," he promises. "Rodrigo will lead them somewhere new, where there's no chop-chopping and everybody is safe."

"But why would anyone want to leave a forest this beautiful?" I ask him. "We have everything we need right here, like fruits and nuts and berries to eat, drinking water that falls from the clouds, plus thick, waxy leaves for the birds and monkeys and lizards to shelter beneath. It's the perfect place!"

Even the forest plants are good to us, one-eye. Many make us well when we're ill or injured. Last summer, I rubbed my poorly wing on a sprig of cordoncillo leaves and it stopped hurting in just a few quick flaps.

I have so many friends here, too. Why would I want to say goodbye to Alice the agouti, or my favourite sloth, Tolle, and even squeezey Winfrey the tree boa? I think that I might even miss Francisco the falcon, at least when

Rainforest Calling

he's not trying to gobble potoos for his lunch, eh? We're all really happy here.

I just wish that I could convince Rodrigo to stay. He usually groans and says things like, "What's the use in being here if there are no more trees? It's better to fly away and find a new home to love, Pedro – maybe on a mountain or an island."

Yesterday, I tried to tell him *again* that an island is no good for animals like the sloth, the agouti or the snake. They don't have wings – how will they get to this new home?

"What's your bright idea, then?" he asked. "How will Pedro the potoo save this forest?"

That's when I tapped my beak and told that noisy macaw all about C.A.R.E.

"Care?"

"Not 'care'," I told him. "**C.A.R.E.!**"

I think that Rodrigo's bird brain might be too small to understand, even though I explained to him (really slowly) that C.A.R.E. is 'Creatures Against Rainforest

Evacuation’.

He just looked back at me as if he thought that my egg might have fallen out of the nest before I hatched.

“Rodrigo, we have to make a stand,” I told him. “We have to stay and show those nasty tree-stealers that this is our home, *comprende*? They can’t just come here to chop and chop. No trees means no world.”

I think that I might have frightened him because that’s when Rodrigo started to shake. “No world!” he shrieked, flapping and squawking as if lightning had nipped at his bottom. “No world!”

I think that Rodrigo is too scared to listen any more. But, hey, perhaps if Pedro spent a little time showing **you** how everyone needs the forest, you might want to listen and help, eh?

My friends tell me that they’ve seen one-eyes in different places: down below in the canopy and on the forest floor... in fact, they’ve spotted you in every layer of our beautiful forest. So I’ll come looking for you and we can explore the forest together, OK?

Great! Fantastic! Amazing! That’s what we’ll do. It’s a

plan! We’ll team up and Pedro will introduce you to his wonderful home. Because we C.A.R.E.

Right?