

# *How Children come to Be*

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**T**here was a child with wings. It flew in the starry sky for many years until it remembered the Earth.

"I will go back to the World," it said and flew round and round the planet. It sought its parents here and there, in Europe, in Africa, in Asia, in everywhere. At last it found its father. He was living in France. Then it found its mother. She was living in Brazil.

"What do I do now?" the child asked of its angel who always and ever kept a watchful eye.

"You must bring them together," said the angel. "There is no other way."

So the child flew around, whispering in the ear of this person and pulling the elbow of that person, trying to get its parents together. Finally the father's boss called him into the office.

"You've been working much too hard," he said. "You need a vacation."

"Where shall I go?" the father asked his sister who he happened to meet on the street.

"To Brazil," she said. "I have a friend who loves it there."

So her father went to buy a ticket to Brazil.

"Where do you want to go in Brazil?" asked the ticket lady.

"I don't know. I've never been there before."

"Then you have to go to the jungle," said the ticket lady. "My uncle says the jungle is wonderful. The biggest river in the world lives there. It's called the Amazon."

So the child's father bought a ticket to the jungle in Brazil, to a city on the shores of the great Amazon river.

But what about the child's mother? Oh, the child had to work hard to get her mother to go to the jungle. The mother didn't like the idea of the jungle—not at all. So the child got all her mother's friends to tell her she should see the jungle, that she could never call herself a true Brazilian if she hadn't been to the jungle where the Amazon flows.

“Okay! Okay! Okay!” laughed her mother at last. “I’ll go to the jungle. But who is going to take me?”

“I will,” said her best friend,” and they jumped into the car and zoomed off.

“Why are you driving so fast?” asked the child’s mother.

“I don’t know,” said her friend. “I just have a feeling that we must get there quickly – we’ll be there in three days.”

And they did have to get there quickly for the father’s airplane was already landing in the middle of the jungle. The father hired a car. He was told it was a good car; that it never broke down and the tires were new. Off he drove; for miles and miles he drove in the jungle, staying at little towns and villages. The people there were friendly and took him into the trees. They showed him the many kinds of trees. They also showed him the animals whenever they spotted them hiding among the leaves. And they took him fishing on the Amazon. O, that river was big, that river was wide, that river was huge. And so were the fish – and some had teeth! Lots of teeth! And some made electricity – lots of electricity! Yes, they did. One even gave him a shock!

One day he was driving from one village to the next, following the winding river. It was a long way. A very long way. Suddenly all four of the car’s tires burst with a BANG! He slammed on the brakes and came to a stop. He got out. He looked at the tires. For no reason at all the four tires had burst.

“Now what?” he said, scratching his head. “I guess I’ll have to wait.”

And wait he did. He waited and waited and waited beside the river and not a single car came along. He saw a toucan with a monstrous beak flying over the water. He heard parrots squawking loudly in a Brazil nut tree. He spied a spider monkey swinging from branch to branch. He even saw a jaguar prowling down the road. He jumped back into the car until it went away. But he never saw another human being. He waited and waited.

Finally he saw dust rising from the road. He heard an engine humming. Whizzing down the road was a white car badly in need of a wash.

“Stop! Stop!” the child’s dad cried, waving his arms.

The car screeched to a halt. Two ladies stared at him and he stared back at one of them, the one sitting in the passenger seat. She’d caught his eye. She was beautiful. Her eyes were liquid pools. Her skin was smooth and soft. Her hair was black and she smiled sweetly. All around her was a golden glow of light.

“What happened to you?” asked the lady driver.

"All my tires burst at once," said the child's father. "I don't know why. It's mighty mysterious."

"You'd better come with us," said the lady driver. "Grab your stuff. You can't spend the night out here, that's for sure. There are jaguars prowling around, and crocodiles too! They will eat you for a snack if you are not careful."

And that's how the father and mother met. Right there in the middle of the jungle beside the great river. But the child's job was not done. It had to find a way to get the father money so he could fly back to Brazil to visit the mother, and then find the money for the mother to fly to France to visit the father.

One day, after the visits had happened, the child noticed that its wings were getting small.

"Why are my wings getting small?" the child asked its angel.

The angel just smiled.

As the days went by, the child's wings got smaller and smaller. It became much harder to fly. In the old days the child would whizz around the world in minutes. Now it could hardly get further than the town the father and mother were living in.

"What's happening to me?" the child asked its angel.

The angel smiled again as the child's wings grew smaller and smaller. One day the wings were only the size of a butterfly's wings. They were still beautiful, but only the size of a small butterfly's wings and the child was obliged to stay beside the mother. That day the angel stayed close. Very close.

"I'm forgetting everything," said the child suddenly. "I can't even remember the names of all the stars and who lives on the sun."

"Shush," said the angel, placing its finger on the child's lips. "Shush," said the angel again as the child's wings disappeared altogether.

"Waaaaaaa!" cried the baby in its mother's arms. "Waaa! Waaa! Waaa!"

"O, she is so beautiful," exclaimed the mother.

"She's a piece of heaven," cried the father. "See how she shines like gold."

That's how the star child became a girl who lived in France and spoke French, but also visited Brazil every year and spoke Portuguese. And the place where the angel pressed its finger is still on the girl's upper lip. It dips inwards beautifully to this day.