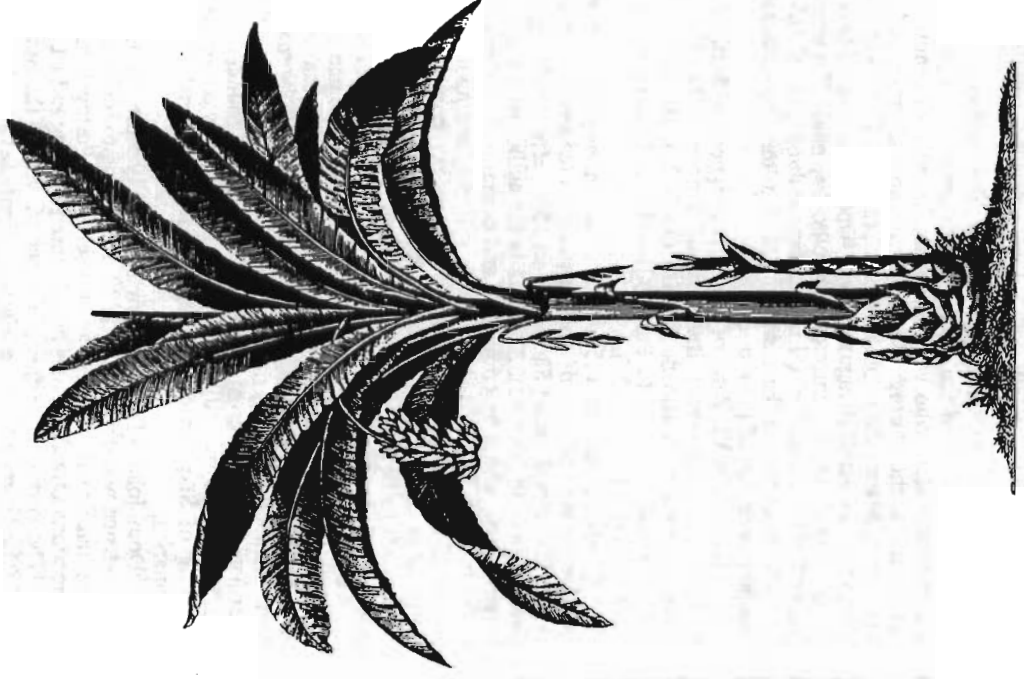


MACUNAÍMA

Mário de Andrade

Translated from the Brazilian Portuguese by E. A. Goodland



RANDOM HOUSE  NEW YORK

This translation is dedicated to

EDWINA MELVILLE
who introduced me to
Macunaima
near that mountain called
The Stump of the Tree of Life

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It was unfortunate that his many other commitments made it impossible for him to continue his collaboration to the end of the book, but I was fortunate in enlisting the help of Sra. Gilda Aquino, also a native of São Paulo. Her perceptive and deep knowledge of the text and her extensive command of English enabled her to help me substantially. Both Sr. Carlos and Dona Gilda played their parts mainly by persuading and leading me into a fuller and more accurate perception of the inner meanings and subtleties of the text, enabling me to concentrate on finding the appropriate words and phrases and developing a style capable of conveying the author's intentions into English, as far as lay within my powers. I must therefore accept full responsibility for failures of comprehension and communication. I fear there must be many, because of the multivalent nature of the work.

I must also record my thanks to those very many people who contributed to my understanding of many regional and slang words and expressions not to be found in the reference books.

Macunaíma



In a far corner of Northern Brazil, at an hour when so deep a hush had fallen on the virgin forest that the brawling of the Uraricoera River could be heard, an Indian woman of the Tapanhuma tribe gave birth to an unlovely son, sired by the Terror of the Night. This child was an oddity, his skin black as calcined ivory. They named him Macunaíma; and he was to become a popular hero.

Even in his childhood this youngster did flabbergasting things. He passed the first six years of his life without talking. If anyone tried to make him speak he would exclaim, "Aw! What a fucking life!" but nothing more. He used to keep in a corner of the communal hut, climbing onto the sleeping platform made of trunks of the rasp palm and watching the others work, particularly his two brothers, Maanape, already getting on in years, and Jiguê, who was in his prime. His favorite pastime was nipping off the heads of leaf-cutting ants. He spent most of his time lying about, but if he spied a coin, he would toddle off at once to get it. He would also rouse himself smartly when the whole family went down to bathe, naked, in the river. He liked to duck under the water and disappear; the women would shriek with amusement at the crabs they said must be living in the fresh water there. In the hut, if one of the girls came to cuddle him, he'd put out his hand to fondle her charms and the girl would run away. As for the men, he spat in their faces. However, he respected his elders and followed with attention all the ritual dances of the tribe, with

their songs and dances prescribed for birth and death, for coming of age, for fertility and harvest, for fun and for war.

On going to bed, he always forgot to pee before he climbed into his little hanging basket. As his mother's hammock was slung below his cradle, the hero flooded her with scalding piss every night, scaring away the mosquitoes. Then he slept, kicking his legs in the air and dreaming of dirty words and fantastic naughtinesses.

During the women's midday chatter the talk was always about the hero's pranks. The women laughed knowingly, saying, "The little one's prickly prickles already has a point!" And in the tribal assembly, King Nagô declared that the hero had his head screwed on the right way.

When Macunaíma was just six years old they made him drink water from a cowbell, so then he began to talk like everyone else. He begged his mother to stop grating cassava tubers on her board set with sharp little flints and to take him for a walk in the woods. She couldn't just drop everything, so she wouldn't take him, no, she wouldn't. Macunaíma wailed and sniveled all day, but she wouldn't give in to him. At night he went on crying. The next day he waited, watching with half an eye for his mother to start work, then he begged her to stop weaving split cane into a basket and to take him for a walk. His mother wanted to finish the basket, so she asked her daughter-in-law, Jigué's wife, to take the little boy. Jigué's wife was a nice girl called Sofará who came rather apprehensively; but Macunaíma was behaving himself and didn't try to put his hand where he oughtn't. Sofará gave the lad a piggyback till she came to a place where a giant arum lily was growing on the riverbank. A spiny palm had fallen into the creek there, holding it back to form a pool, and its fronds were dancing a merry jig in time with the burble of the overflowing water. There was a charming view into the distance where many cor-morants and ducklars were patrolling the reach between the trees. The girl put Macunaíma down on the bank but he began to whine—too many ants there, he said—and he begged her to carry him to the crest of a ridge hidden behind the trees. Sofará did this, but as soon as she laid the child down on the litter of dry

leaves carpeting the forest floor among the sedges, eddoes and creeping spiderwort, he transformed himself into a comely prince. There they made love . . . many times.

As they returned to the homestead the girl pretended that carrying the little boy on her back such a long way had wearied her; in fact, the hero had made love to her until she was quite spent. She had hardly laid Macunaíma in his hammock when Jigué returned from casting his net for fish and noticed that his wife had done no housework that day. Jigué was vexed at this, and after picking off his ticks, he gave her a belting. Sofará took her punishment without uttering a squeak.

Jigué suspected nothing and began plaiting some fiber drawn from the leaves of the wild pineapple to make a cord. He had come across the fresh tracks of a tapir and wanted a noose to trap it. Macunaíma asked for some of the cord for himself, but Jigué said it wasn't a baby's toy, which caused him to start blubbering again and giving them all a sleepless night.

The next day Jigué rose early to finish off his snare, and finding the youngster still down in the dumps, greeted him sarcastically, "Good morning! How's our little heartthrob today?"

Macunaíma kept a surly silence.

"So you don't want to speak to me, is that it?"

"I'm fed up."

"What's the matter with you?"

Macunaíma then begged again for some of the fiber. Jigué eyed him with distaste but sent his wife to fetch some yarn for the boy, which she did. Macunaíma thanked her and went off to ask the piaiman to plait it into a cord for him and to blow on it hard with tobacco smoke to put it under a magic spell.

When everything was ready, Macunaíma asked his mother to leave her cassiri to ferment on its own and to take him for a walk in the woods. The old lady wouldn't leave her chores, but Jigué's wife slyly told her mother-in-law that she was "at his service" and carried him off into the forest on her shoulders.

As soon as she put the boy down among the wild plantains and creeping plants on the litter of the forest floor, the little one grew and grew, turning once more into a comely prince. He told

Sofará to wait a moment while he went to the tapir's drinking place to set his trap, promising to be back in two shakes to make love with her till the sun went down. They had not been home long from their jaunt when Jigué also returned, having set his snare on the tapir's trail. His wife had done no housework at all, making Jigué so furious that even before picking off his ticks, he gave her a sound thrashing. But Sofará suffered her beating with resignation.

Dawn had barely climbed above the treetops on the following day when Macunaíma woke everyone with his hideous bawling.

"Hey! Someone go down to the waterhole! There's a beast caught in my trap!" But no one believed him, and they all started their day's work. Macunaíma, really miffed, begged Sofará to make a quick visit to the drinking place just to have a look. She did so and came racing back shouting to everyone that there was indeed a huge tapir in the trap, already dead. The whole tribe turned out to fetch the animal, dumfounded by the brat's cunning. Jigué, with nothing in his own noose, met them all carrying the carcass and lent them a hand. As he cut it up and shared out the flesh he didn't give Macunaíma any of the meat, only the innards. The hero swore he'd take revenge.

The very next day he pestered Sofará to take him for a walk, and they dallied in the bush until nightfall. The little boy had no sooner touched the foliage than he was transformed into a prince burning with ardor. They made love. They made love again. They made love three times, then ran deeper into the forest to rouse themselves into the mood for more. After working each other up with nudging and tickling, they buried themselves in sand and scorched their bodies with a quick fire of straw—a very stimulating treatment. Macunaíma wrenched up a balsam sapling for a club and hid behind a great caribe-lure tree. When Sofará came running up, he dealt her such a whack on the head that her scalp split and she fell, doubled up with laughter, at his feet. She jerked at one of his legs and Macunaíma grunted with relish as he lifted his club again, but the minx bit off his big toe and swallowed it. Macunaíma, whimpering with delight, traced tattoo patterns on her body with the blood trickling from his

foot. Then, tensing his muscles, he pulled himself up on a trapeze of bush ropes and with a heave and a ho swung himself into the topmost branches of the caribe-lure tree; Sofará climbed after him. The slender branches swayed, bending under the weight of the prince; when the girl reached the top they made love again, swinging in great arcs across the sky. This thrilling movement made Macunaíma desire a downright orgy with Sofará. He doubled up his body for a great plunge but failed to make it; the branch broke and they tumbled down to sprawl in a heap on the ground. When the hero had recovered his wits he looked around for the girl; she was nowhere to be seen. Just as he was about to scramble to his feet and hunt for her, the silence was broken by the blood-curdling mewling of a puma from a low branch above his head. The hero fell on his face in terror so that he wouldn't see himself being eaten. Then he heard a giggle and felt a gob of spittle smack him in the ribs. It was the girl! Macunaíma began to pelt her with pebbles; Sofará yelped with excitement on being wounded and in turn decorated his body with drips of blood. At last a stone split the corner of her mouth and knocked out three teeth. She leaped from the branch and landed astride the hero's belly with a great crash. He wrapped his body around hers, and howling with relish, they made love again.

The Evening Star was already bright in the sky when the girl returned, pretending to be tired out from carrying the child on her back. However, though Jigué was a witless sort of chap, he had become suspicious and had followed the couple into the forest where he saw the transformation and all that followed. He was hopping mad with fury when they arrived, and snatching up a thong of plaited rawhide called an armadillo's tail, he walloped the hero with it till his arse was skinned. The hubbub was so great that it curtailed the night; many songbirds fell to the ground in fright and were turned to stone.

When Jigué tired of flogging him, Macunaíma ran to the clearing where they grew their food and chewed some poppy-thistle roots, returning completely healed. Jigué took Sofará back to her father, then went calmly to sleep in his hammock.

Growing Up



It was not long before the witless Jigué turned up dragging a young woman by the hand; his new wife, Iriqui. She was very fond of showing off and always carried a large live rat in her tangled thatch of curly hair. She painted her face with bright carmine dye from the macaw tree and black genip juice, and every morning she rubbed her lips with a fruit from the manicole palm, making them purple, then touched them up with lime juice, turning them bright scarlet. Next she garbed herself in a cotton wrap striped with the green sap from the cow tree and black dye extracted from wania bark. Her hair she perfumed with balsam; altogether she looked spiffy!

At this time, when the last of Macunaíma's tapir had been eaten, famine struck the household. Game . . . no one found game anymore, not even an armadillo; and because Maanape had killed a dolphin for food, the small toad Maraguana, who is Father of the Dolphins, had become annoyed and sent a flood which rotted the corn crop. They had eaten everything; even the hard lumpy remains of cassava were finished and the little fire they kept going at night never grilled a thing, it served only to relieve the chill. There was nothing for anyone to cook on it, not even a bit of the dried meat they kept for fish bait.

Macunaíma chose this time to tease his family. He said there must still be plenty of different kinds of fish in the river, so they ought to go and stupefy them with fish-fuddle, by pounding some sticks of this climbing vine and flogging the water with the

frayed pieces. Maanape muttered, "I haven't seen any fish-fuddle around here lately."

Macunaíma craftily volunteered, "Near that cave where the coins are buried, I'm sure I saw masses of the stuff."

"Then come with us and show us where it is!"

Off they went. The banks of the flooded river were treacherous, since they could not easily tell which was land and which was water between the pollarded trees. Maanape and Jigué searched and searched, up to their eyes in mud falling down—*splash!*—into pits hidden by the flood. The brothers leaped, shrieking, out of these holes with their hands clasped over their backsides because of the sneaky candirú fish trying to wriggle their barbed bodies into their arseholes. Macunaíma laughed behind his hand at his brothers' antics as they combed the area for fish-fuddle, and pretended to search too; but he never took a step away from his comfortable dry patch.

When the brothers came near him he cowered down and whimpered with faked tiredness.

"No point killing yourself; you can knock off now, sonny!" they said.

So Macunaíma sat on the riverbank, splashing his feet in the water to scare off the mosquitoes. There were millions of mosquitoes large and small, gnats, biting flies, midges, blackflies, sandflies, gadflies, horseflies, bluebottles, blowflies, cockchafers, bugs, ladybirds, pismires and clegs; every kind of stinging and biting insect you can think of.

At dusk the brothers were in a nasty mood when they came to fetch Macunaíma, because they hadn't found a single stick of fish-fuddle, not one. The hero was frightened but had the gall to ask slyly, "Did you find any?"

"Not a thing."

"But it was here I saw some fish-fuddle. You know, that plant can become human. Perhaps it sensed we were looking for it and hid. After all, once upon a time fish-fuddle was human like us."

The brothers admired the child's gumption, and the three of them returned to their hut together.

Hunger had made Macunaíma very fractious. The next day he

asked the old lady, "Mother, whoever could lift our house to the high ground on the other side of the river, whoever could do that? Just shut your eyes for a moment, old lady, and ask the question the way I did."

The old lady did so. Macunaíma begged her to keep her eyes shut a little longer. With a great effort of will power he transferred the thatched hut, the raised threshold, their arrows, baskets, sieves, hammocks, all the household gear, to a clearing in the bush on higher ground on the other side of the river. When the old lady opened her eyes, everything was there, and in addition there was game, fish, ripe fruit hanging from banana plants; plenty of everything to eat. She went out to cut some bananas.

"Forgive me for asking, Mother, but whatever do you want to cut more bananas for?"

"To take to your brother Jigüé and his beautiful Iriqui, and to your brother Maanape, who are all suffering so much from hunger."

Macunaíma was still feeling cantankerous. He brooded for a while, then asked the old lady, "Mother, whoever could lift our house back again to the other bank of the river where the ground is all flooded? Whoever could do it? Just ask me that!"

The old lady did as she was told. Macunaíma begged her to keep her eyes shut; and he willed everything, their house and all their chattels, back to the soggy place on the flooded land where they had been before. When the old lady opened her eyes, everything was back in place next to the huts of his brother Maanape and his brother Jigüé and the beautiful Iriqui. And they all went on groaning with hunger.

The old lady went clean off her rocker with fury. She grabbed the hero by his waistband and hauled him off through the forest to a huge burned-out clearing which was now a tangle of dense secondary growth, called the Hermitage of Judas. She pushed on into it a league and a half, out of sight of the forest rim. The level blanket of vegetation was interrupted only by a few stunted cashew trees, and not even the harsh croak of the red-rumped oriole broke the silence. The old lady set the little rapsallion

down on the barren ground where he would be unable to grow and spoke, "Now your mother is going away. As for you, you will stay here, lost in this abandoned clearing, where you will find no nourishment to make you grow!"

She disappeared. Macunaíma cast his eyes over the lifeless desert surrounding him and felt like bursting into tears. But since there was nobody around to impress, he took heart, and tottering on his bandy little legs, he put his best foot forward. He rambled from place to place for a week until he met Curupira, Lord of the Forest, whose toes point backward. He had with him his dog Papamel, and he was grilling some meat. Knowing that Curupira lives on palm shoots and makes a habit of asking people for tobacco, Macunaíma spoke to him. "Hello, grandpa! Can you spare some of that game for me to eat?"

"Of course!" replied Curupira. He cut a slice of flesh from his own leg, grilled it and gave it to the boy, asking, "And what may you be doing in this overgrown clearing, sonny?"

"Taking a stroll."

"You don't say!"

"That's right, just taking a stroll." Then he told Curupira how his mother had punished him for behaving so spitefully toward his brothers. Telling how he had moved their house back again to where they could find no game, he burst out in a great guffaw.

Curupira eyed him and muttered, "You are no longer a little brat, sonny; you must be a big man to be able to do such a thing!"

Macunaíma thanked him, and inquired from Curupira the right way back to the Tapanhuma dwelling site. Curupira, wanting only to eat him, gave him the wrong directions: "You go from here, young man, you go over there, keep left of that tree, then turn again, and come back here right under my ballocks!"

Macunaíma started out following these instructions, but halting in front of the tree, he scratched his little leg and mumbled, "Aw! What a fucking life!" and kept right on.

Curupira waited for some time, but when the boy did not show up, he mounted the stag that served him as a horse, stuck

his turned-back toes into his steed's groin and started yelling, "Flesh of my leg, flesh of my leg!"

From where it lay inside the hero's belly, the flesh replied, "What's up?"

Macunaíma put on steam and ran into the open forest but realized that Curupira, going faster than he, would soon catch up with him.

"Flesh of my leg, flesh of my leg!"

From inside the boy's belly, the flesh replied, "What's up?"

Macunaíma felt desperate. It was a day of April showers, the day of the fox's wedding; the raindrops glowed golden like grains of maize in the rays from Old Lady Vei, the Sun. Macunaíma found himself near a puddle, took a drink of the muddy water and puked up the meat he had eaten.

"Flesh of my leg, flesh of my leg!" shouted Curupira as he tore along.

"What's up?" responded the flesh, now lying in the puddle.

Macunaíma gained the shelter of a clump of prince's-feather on the far side of the wilderness and escaped. A league and a half farther on, from behind an anthill, he heard a voice singing softly and slowly this little ditty: "Agouti puffs a pipe of pot . . .!"

He went over that way and found Agouti, the wild cavy, making cassava flour from grated manioc by squeezing out the poisonous juice in a tubular matapi woven of palm canes. "Hello, grandma! How about giving me some of your nice cassava to eat?"

"Certainly!" said Agouti and gave the boy some sweet cassava, asking, "And what are you doing here in the forest, my child?"

"Taking a stroll."

"Oh, and what else?"

"Just strolling around!" He told her how he had got the better of Curupira, and burst into a great guffaw.

Agouti eyed him and muttered, "No little boy could do that, child, no little boy could do it. I'll make your body the equal of your brains!" With this, she snatched up the wooden bowl full of

poisonous manioc juice and threw the liquid over the child. Macunaíma dodged aside in fright but only managed to get his head out of the way; the rest of his body was drenched. The hero sneezed and fell to the ground. As he was wiping himself he felt himself growing bigger and getting stronger until he reached the size of a strapping young man. However, his head, which had not been doused, stayed the same as before—the nasty, oafish mug of the child he had been.

Macunaíma thanked Agouti for what she had done, and singing at the top of his voice, sped like an arrow for home. Night came, thronged with insects; files of ants on the ground and swarms of mosquitoes hatched in the flood waters; there was a feeling of home in the air.

The old Tapanhuma woman heard the voice of her son in the twilight distance and marveled. Macunaíma approached her, his face crumpled with worry, and said, "Mother dear, I had a dream that one of my teeth had fallen out!"

"That foretells my death!" divined the old lady.

"I know it! Only too well do I know it! You have only one more day to live, that's all, and just because you gave birth to me."

The next day the brothers went out to fish and hunt, the old lady went to the garden plot, and Macunaíma stayed behind, alone with Jigué's wife, the beautiful Iriqui. He changed himself into a leaf-cutting ant and nibbled at her, hoping to arouse her; but she picked up the ant and threw it as far away as she could. Then he transformed himself into an annatto bush. The beautiful Iriqui laughed, picked the seed pods and made herself up with their orange-red dye, painting her face and drawing lines on her body to emphasize her curves in the most flattering manner. To please her in return Macunaíma then changed himself back into a man, and from then on he and Jigué's wife lived together.

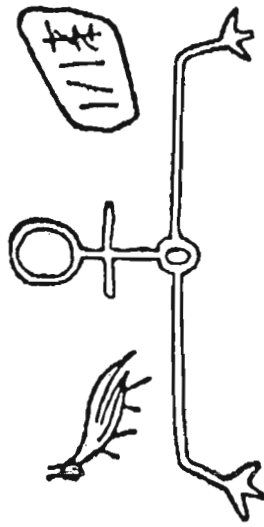
On the brothers' return from their hunting trip, Jigué at once noticed the switch; however, Maanape talked sense into him and made him see that Macunaíma was now a man for good and all, and stalwart too. Maanape was a sorcerer. It sank into Jigué's

thick skull that the hut was full of food: there were bananas, there was corn, there was sweet cassava, the troughs were full of rice wine and cassiri to drink, there were shrimp and fish of many kinds, there was passion fruit and sapodillas, there was venison and the fresh and tasty meat of the labba; every kind of good food and drink you can think of. Jigué had to admit that it wasn't worthwhile starting a quarrel with his younger brother, so he left the beautiful Iriqui with Macunaíma. He sighed, picked off his ticks and went calmly to sleep in his hammock.

The next day, after making love with the beautiful Iriqui first thing in the morning, Macunaíma went out to have a look around. He crossed the bewitched kingdom of the Shapely Stone in Pernambuco, and when nearing the township of Santarém, he flushed a doe which had just dropped a fawn.

"I'll hunt this one!" he said to himself and chased the doe, which easily escaped; but the hero was able to pick up the fawn, which could as yet scarcely walk. He hid behind a paddlewood tree and prodded the fawn to make it bleat. The doe went quite crazy. With bulging eyes she stood there anxiously, then came closer to see her fawn; she stopped right in front of it, crying out with motherly love. The hero let fly an arrow into the recently delivered doe. She fell, kicked for a little while, then lay stretched out stiffly on the ground. The hero sang a chant of victory, then went up to have a closer look at his prey; his song changed to a cry of dismay. This must have been a plot devised by Anhangá, God of the Chase. That was no deer pierced by Macunaíma's arrow; no, it was his Tapanhuma mother herself lying there dead, all scratched and torn by palm thorns and cactus spines.

After the hero emerged from the spell cast on him, he went to call his brothers; and all three of them wept mightily and spent the night watching keening, drinking palm wine and eating fish balls. Early in the morning, before dawn, they wrapped the old lady's body in a hammock and buried it below a crag at the place called Pai da Tocadeira, or Father of the Great Black Ant. Maanape, who was a sorcerer of the highest order, engraved an epitaph on the rock. It looked like this:



They fasted for a time in accordance with the tribal rules; Macunaíma spent the period of the fast heroically lamenting his mother. The belly of the dead woman swelled and swelled, turning by the end of the rainy season into a smoothly rounded hillock.

Finally Macunaíma gave his hand to Iriqui, Iriqui gave hers to Maanape, who gave his hand to Jigué, and the four of them left for this world of ours.

Ci, Mother of the Forest



There came a day when the four, following a trail through the forest far from any creek or pool, were suffering badly from thirst. There wasn't even a refreshing hog plum to be seen in the neighborhood; and Vei, her rays piercing through the foliage, harassed the wanderers without respite. They sweated along as if under a spell in which their bodies had been slicked with butter-nut oil. Suddenly Macunaíma halted, and with a great gesture wrenched them out of their sleepwalking. Not a sound could be heard, but Macunaíma whispered, "There's something there!"

They left the beautiful Iriqui sitting on the buttress of a great silk-cotton tree, prinking herself up, while they cautiously crept on. Vei, the Sun, was by now satisfied with the flogging her rays had bestowed on the backs of the three brothers, so that Macunaíma, scouting a league and a half ahead, stumbled in the gloom over a sleeping woman. By her withered right breast he saw at once that she was an Amazon, one of that tribe of women living without any men on the shores of the lake called Mirror of the Moon, fed by the river Nhamundá. She was Ci, Mother of the Forest. She was a fine-looking woman, though wasted by debauchery and painted in black patterns with genipapo dye.

The hero flung himself on top of her to make love. She rebuffed him, and while he was drawing out his rapier she stabbed him with her three-pronged lance. A terrific scrap took place; the forest canopy above echoed with the cries of the scuffling couple, causing the birds to shrivel up with fright. Macunaíma was get-

ting the worst of it. He took a punch that made his nose bleed, and he had a deep gash in his buttocks from the trident. The Amazon hadn't even the tiniest scratch, while with each blow she struck she drew more blood from the hero, who was letting out such dreadful roars that the birds shrank in terror. At last, getting the wind up from being outmatched by this female warrior, the hero turned and fled, calling to his brothers, "Help! Help! I'm killing her!"

The brothers rushed up and grabbed Ci. Maanape tied her arms behind her back while Jigué bashed her on the head with his redwood club, so that she fell helpless among the ferns growing from the litter on the forest floor. When she had stopped struggling, Macunaíma closed in and made love with the Mother of the Forest. This was the signal for flocks of parakeets, a host of scarlet macaws and green Amazon parrots, a multitude of parrots and parrotlets of every kind, to converge overhead to salute Macunaíma, the new Emperor of the Virgin Forest.

The three brothers continued on their way, taking the new ladylove with them. They made a tour of the most celebrated places in Brazil's romances and fairy tales: they crossed the Township of Flowers, avoiding the River of Bitterness; they passed below the Falls of Felicity and took the Way of Pleasures, arriving at last at My Darling's Grove in the foothills of the mountains of Venezuela. It was thence that Macunaíma ruled over the whole of the mysterious forest while Ci, grasping her three-pointed lance, commanded the warrior-women taking part in forays.

The hero lived a tranquil life, happily lazing away the days in his hammock, killing sugar ants and knocking back foaming mugs of cassava beer; when he felt like singing, accompanying himself with the fitful twanging on his little rustic fiddle with its monkey-gut strings, woods resounded with delight, lulling to sleep all such pests as snakes, ticks, mosquitoes, ants and the mischievous spirits of the bush.

At night Ci would return bleeding from her wounds, and then, reeking with the balsam she smeared on them, she would climb into the hammock she herself had woven from her own hair to

keep the hero from straying. The two of them made love, and made love again, giggling and teasing each other. They went on giggling, close together, for a long time.

Ci smelled so strongly of balsam that Macunaíma was overcome with fits of dizziness. "Phew! That's a strong perfume, my lovey-dovey!" he murmured delightedly, opening his nostrils wider. He became so faint that sleep began to sprinkle dust on his eyelids. But the Mother of the Forest was not yet satisfied—Oh no, not by a long shot! And with a skillful twist of the hammock that entwined them, she summoned her swain to more love-making. Dying to get some sleep, feeling like hell, Macunaíma made love again for the sake of his reputation; it was only when Ci wanted to giggle and fool around with him afterward, her ardor slaked at last, that the hero groaned, "Aw, what a fucking life!" and turning his back on her, dropped into a sound sleep.

But Ci wanted to make love yet again. "Come on! I say, come on!" she invited. The hero was so deep in his slumber that the Mother of the Forest had to pick up her trident and give her mate a jab. Macunaíma woke up squirming with fresh lust and gave a great guffaw: "It can't be done, you temptress!"

"Let's!"

"Let me get some sleep, my love!"

"Let's make love!"

"Aw, what a fucking life!"—and they made love again.

One day, after a grand piwarri-drinking, Ci found that the Emperor of the Virgin Forest had passed out during this terrific binge. She took him off to make love, but in the middle the hero forgot what he was doing.

"Now then, hero!"

"Now what?"

"Can't you go on?"

"Go on with what?"

"Well, I'll be damned! Here's a fellow making love and he quits in the middle!"

"Aw, what a fucking life!" Never had Macunaíma even faintly

imagined being as drunk as this. And cuddling into the soft embrace of his ladylove's hair, he fell snugly asleep.

Ci thought up a wily ruse to fan his embers. She scoured the woods for stinging nettles, and with bunches of them she thrashed the hero's lobeck and her own pat-a-cake. This treatment set Macunaíma on fire so that he came up like a randy lion; Ci likewise. The couple made love again and again in an orgy of flaming passion.

But there were sleepless nights when they discovered other pleasures. At times all the blazing stars poured down on earth a lambent burning oil so hot that nobody could bear it; the whole forest seemed to be afire. Not a bird could stay in its nest. All the birds turned their heads uneasily from side to side and took off from their perches; and in the greatest miracle the world has ever known they suddenly shattered the blackness of the dawn with their chorus of warbling, singing, whistling, piping, caroling and twittering; a song without end. The din was tremendous, the stink indescribable, and the heat even greater than before.

Macunaíma gave the hammock a jerk, throwing Ci right out. She woke in a frenzy and jumped on top of him; they made love like that. Completely revived by the joys of spring, they went to work devising new ways of making love.

Scarcely six months had passed before the Mother of the Forest gave birth to a son, whose skin was the color of blood. At this news, famous mulatto women came from Bahia, from Recife, from Rio Grande do Norte and from Paraíba. They gave the Mother of the Forest a great red bow to bind up her hair, red the color of calamity, because she was now the leader of the Red Circle in all the Pastoril plays at Christmas time. Afterward they left for home in peace and contented happiness, dancing, dancing all the way, followed by a crowd of soccer players, scamps, sweethearts, crooners and other young people with more money than sense. Macunaíma lay up for a month according to the rules of couvade; but he refused to fast. The baby had the typical flattened head of the Northerner, and to flatten it even more Macunaíma used to pat it every day, saying to the tiny tot,

"Grow up quickly, son of mine, and go to São Paulo to make oodles of money!"

All the Amazon women loved this little red-skinned child and made much of him; in his first bath they put all the tribe's jewels so that he would never suffer poverty. They had sent for scissors from Bolívia and tucked them, open, under his pillow in case Tutu Marambá should come to suck the baby's navel and his mother Ci's big toe. That dreaded hobgoblin of the bush did come one night, found the scissors and was fooled by them; he sucked the scissors' pivot and went away satisfied. At this time they all thought of nothing but the little boy. They sent to São Paulo for the famous woolen booties knitted by Dona Ana Francisca de Almeida Leite Morais; to Pernambuco for lace in traditional designs such as "Alpine Rose," "Myrtle Flower," and "I long for thee" woven by the hands of Joaquina Leitão, better known as Quinquina Cacunda. From the best tamarind cordial made by the Sisters Loura Vieira of Óbidos they prepared a refreshing drink for the little chap to wash down his doses of bitter worm syrup. A happy life . . . how good it was!

But one day a wood owl lit on the ridgepole of the Emperor's thatched dwelling and uttered a screech of ill omen. Macunaíma shook with such fright that he scared off all the mosquitoes; he began to drink piwarri by the quart to scare off his fright as well. He drank and slept the whole night long; and that very night the Black Serpent came and sucked Ci's remaining breast dry of milk. Because Jiguê had not managed to get any of the Amazon women with child there was no wet nurse for the little boy, who perforce fed from his mother's breast again the next day. Poisoned by the Black Serpent's venom, he gave one gasp and died.

They put the little angel into a funeral urn molded in the shape of a turtle; and to prevent evil spirits eating out its eyes, they buried it in the middle of the hamlet to the accompaniment of much singing, dancing and piwarri-drinking. To bring this rite to an end, Macunaíma's ladylove, Ci, still adorned in her mourning finery, took from her necklace her celebrated greenstone amulet, the *muiraquitã*, carved into the semblance of a cayman,

gave it to her lover and ascended to heaven on a turtle-ladder bush rope. And there she still lives, riding the sky in all her finery, free from the ants at last, beautified with shining light and changed into the star we know as Beta Centauri.

When Macunaíma visited his son's grave the next day he noticed, growing from the corpse, a small plant, which he treated with the greatest care. This plant became the guarana shrub, from whose crushed fruit men now make a drink that cures many illnesses and refreshes them from the heat of Vei, the Sun.

The Moon Water-Mamma



Very early the next day the hero, suffering from an intense longing for Ci, his unforgettable ladylove, pierced his lower lip to hold the cayman amulet, using the venerable greenstone as a labret. He felt himself to be on the verge of tears. He called urgently for his brothers, bade farewell to the Amazon women and departed.

They led a vagrant life, wandering through all the forests over which Macunaíma held sway. Everywhere he went he received homage, and he was always accompanied by his retinue of scarlet macaws and parakeets. During one night of grief he climbed a palm tree bearing fruit bruised purple like his soul and gazed into the sky at the elegant image of Ci. "You torturing she-devil!" he groaned. Suffering intensely, he invoked the gods by singing hymns of great length:

O God of Love! God of Love!
Thou who dost dry up the rains,
Make the winds of the ocean
Rage across my land,
So that the clouds drift away
And my she-devil shines
Clear and steadfast in the heavens.
Calm all the waters of the rivers
So that when I bathe in them
I can make love to that she-devil
Reflected in the mirror of the waters.

And so on.

Climbing down, he wept, leaning on Maanapé's shoulder, while Jiguê, sobbing with pity, made up the campfire in case the hero should be feeling cold. Maanapé, choking back his tears, invoked the Givers of Sleep, Acutipuru, Murucutu and Ducucu, with lullabies such as:

O Acutipuru!
Lend the priceless boon of sleep
To Macunaíma,
For his heart is wounded deep!

They picked off his ticks and soothed him, rocking him to and fro. The hero became calmer and more peaceful, falling into a deep sleep.

The next day the travelers resumed the journey through the mysterious forest, Macunaíma being followed at all times by the retinue of scarlet macaws and parakeets. They journeyed on and on until one day, when dawn had begun to banish the darkness of the night, they heard, from far in the distance, what sounded like the lamentations of a young girl. They went to see, and a league and a half farther on they found a cascade, the water falling down the rocks as interminably as the flow of tears from a grieving woman courses down her cheeks.

Macunaíma asked this cascade, "Whatever is the matter?"

"Nothing to do with you!"

"Tell me!" — and the cascade told them what had happened. "You should know," she said, "that I am Naipi, daughter of the chief Mexê-Mexoitiqui, whose name means, in my language, Pussyfoot. I was a beautiful young maiden and all the chieftains in the neighborhood craved to sleep in my hammock to find if my body was softer than the down of the silk-cotton tree. But when anyone came I bit him and kicked him for the joy of proving his strength. None of them could stand this treatment; they all became disgruntled and left me.

"My tribe was in bondage to Capei, the Moon Water-Mamma, who lived in an underground den together with a swarm of leaf-

cutting ants. Always—at the time of year when the trees on the riverbank glow yellow with their flowers—the Moon Water-Mamma came to our village to choose an unblemished maiden to go and sleep with her in her lair full of skeletons.

"Just on that day when for the first time my body was weeping tears of blood praying to serve the strength of a man, an owl of ill omen hooted, early in the morning, from the ivory palms around my thatched hut, forewarning me that Capei, the Moon Water-Mamma, was on her way to choose me. The trees on the riverbank shone with golden blossom; and the flowers rained like blazing tears on to the shoulders of Titcaté, one of my father's young warriors, raising his lust for me to the boiling point. Sadness had settled on the village as if a swarm of ants had devoured everything but the silence.

"At dusk, when the old witch doctor was drawing the curtain of night from its hiding place, Titcaté gathered up armfuls of the little yellow flowers and brought them to my hammock on this, my last night of freedom. I bit him.

"The blood spurted from his wrist but he made nothing of it; he was beside himself with unbridled lust. He stuffed my mouth with the flowers so that I could not bite him again. Titcaté leaped into my hammock and we coupled.

"After we had made love, rendered silly by the running blood and the little golden poui flowers, my conqueror carried me on his back to the river, threw me into a canoe beached at the thicket where the hoatzins lurk, and fleeing from the Water-Mamma, made a beeline for the broad reaches of the river Zangado, wide as the ocean.

"At the first blush of dawn, just as the old witch doctor was returning night's curtain to its hiding place, Capei, the Moon Water-Mamma, came to fetch me. Finding my bloodstained hammock empty, she screamed and rushed off to hunt us down. She kept on after us; people saw how at the water's edge the river Zangado was thrown up into a swash by the rapid passage of her body, and they judged from her screams that she was getting closer and closer to us.

"Titcaté could no longer paddle. Loss of blood from his wrist

had brought him near death and put an end to our escape. Capei took hold of me, turned me upside down and put me to the test of the egg which told her for certain that I had already coupled with Titcaté.

"She was full of such unimaginable rage that she wanted to have done with this world. She transformed me into this cascade, and brought Titcaté to the bank of the river, changed into a plant. It's that one there, there below, there! It's that so very beautiful water hyacinth you can see swaying over there in the water, beckoning to me. Its purple flowers are the drops of blood from the bite which the chill of my waterfall has congealed. Capei herself lives below me, trying all the time to assure herself that my maidenhood has indeed been taken by that young man. It was so, and I shall be imprisoned in this rock, weeping, weeping, till the end of time everlasting, lamenting my inability to make love ever again with my warrior, my Titcaté..."

She stopped. Drops from the cascade rained like tears on Macunaíma's knees and he shook with emotion. "If... if... if that insane water monster should appear, I... I'd kill her!"

At once, with a terrifying shriek, Capei emerged from the water. It was Capei, the Moon Water-Mamma. Macunaíma sprang to his feet, his face aglow with heroism, and advanced on the monster. Capei opened her mouth wide and puffed out a swarm of hornets. Macunaíma beat at the hornets and got rid of them. The monster then drew out a whip, tinkling with tiny bells at the tip; but at that very instant a stink ant bit the hero's heel, doubling him up with agony so that the whiplash passed over his head and struck Capei herself full in the face. She shrieked again and stabbed Macunaíma in the thigh. He took a short step backward, snatched up a sharp flake of rock and—*slash!*—with one stroke smote off the brutal bulldyke's head.

Her body eddied in the current while the head with fluttering eyes came to give the kiss of the vanquished to the victor's feet. The hero was terrified and fled into the forest, followed by his brothers.

"Come here, you little black devil you, come here!" called the head. The brothers ran headlong for a league and a half, then

looked back; Capei's head came rolling along looking for them. They raced on again until too winded to run farther, so they climbed a bergamot tree on the riverbank to see if the head was still following. The head arrived beneath the tree and asked for some of the fruit. Macunaíma shook the tree and the head collected the fruit on the ground and asked for more. Jiguê shook some more fruit into the river, but the head would not risk going in. Then Maanape threw a fruit with all his might as far away as he could; when the head went to look for it the brothers climbed down and escaped.

Running like mad, they came to a house a league and a half farther on where the bachelor of Cananéia lived. This old coot was sitting in the doorway reading some obscure manuscripts. Macunaíma said to him, "How do you do, bachelor?"

"Not too bad, unknown traveler."

"Taking a little fresh air, are you?"

"C'est vrai, as they say in French."

"Well, so long, bachelor. I'm in rather a hurry!"—and they jogged along again, crossing the prehistoric shell mounds of Caputera and Morrete without stopping to catch their breath. A little farther on was an abandoned house, which they entered, shutting the door securely. It was only then that Macunaíma had time to notice that he had lost his precious labret. As it was the only keepsake he had to remind him of Ci, the loss made him feel acutely wretched. He was all for going out at once to look for the stone, but the brothers wouldn't let him. It wasn't long before the head arrived and crashed into the door.

"Whatever's that?"

"Open the door and let me in!"

Could wild horses get them to open that door? They could not! So the head could not get in. Macunaíma was unaware that the head had become his slave and would do him no harm. The head waited a good while, but seeing that they wouldn't open up, it began to brood on what would become of it. If it turned into water, then somebody would drink it; if it became a mosquito, it would be sprayed with Flit; if it became a railway train, it would be derailed; if a river, it would be put on a map. It

resolved . . . "I'm going to be the Moon!" It screamed, "Open the door, gentlemen, I want to ask you something!"

Macunaíma looked through a knothole and warned Jiguê, who was about to open the door, "Look out! It's undone!"

Jiguê slammed the door shut. That is how the expression "It's undone!" came to be used when someone doesn't do as asked.

When Capei saw that they were not going to open the door, she began wailing loudly and called for a giant spider to come and help her climb up to heaven.

"The heat of the Sun would melt my thread," objected the spider. So the head asked the golden orioles to gather together and make the day as dark as night.

"Nobody can see my thread in the dark," objected the spider. The head went to the snowfields of the Andes to fetch a calabash full of hoarfrost and said, "I'll pour some out every league and a half; the frost will make your thread glisten. Now we can get going."

"All right! Let's go!"—and the spider started to spin its thread on the ground. With the first puff of breeze that came, the gossamer thread was wafted into the sky. The crab spider climbed up it to the top, dribbled a mouthful of hoarfrost down it, which made it all glisten below, while above the spider went on spinning more gossamer.

The head cried, "Goodbye, all of you! I'm going up to heaven!" and she started to eat the thread hanging there from the vast expanse of sky.

The brothers opened their door and watched her. "You're going all the way up to heaven, are you?"

"Ummmmmmmm!" was all she could reply without opening her mouth.

An hour before dawn Capei, the Moon Water-Mamma, arrived in heaven. She was more than a little bloated from having eaten so much of the spider's thread, and pale from the effort. The sweat fell from her brow to reach the earth as drops of fresh morning dew. It's because of the frost on the thread that Capei is so cold. While hitherto Capei had been the dreaded Water-Mamma, now she is the Moon sailing up there through the vast

expanse of heaven. It is because of the Moon's ascent that spiders like to spin their web at night.

All next day the brothers combed the meadows by the river-side for the precious amulet, but they searched in vain; it was nowhere to be seen. They inquired of all the creatures there: tortoises, marmosets, little armadillos, river turtles, lizards, poisonous wasps, swallows, small owls of ill omen, woodpeckers, motmots; they asked the orioles and their close friends and lodgers, the marabunta hornets; they asked the cockroach and the wood louse; they inquired from the bush turkey that cries "Tang" and from his wife that cries "Ting"; from the lizard that plays hide-and-seek with the rat; from fish with scales and fish without; and from the sandpipers that skitter along the sandy beaches—all these living things they asked; not one had seen anything or knew anything.

The brothers took to the trail again and roamed throughout the imperial domain. The silence was forbidding; the despair was frightening. From time to time Macunaíma forced himself to stop thinking of his she-devil. How he wished he could stay that way! But these times passed. He wept a great deal, the tears running down his fuzzy cheeks to baptize his hairy chest. Then he sighed, wagging his tiny head, "Fiddlesticks, brother! I'll ne'er find a patch on that other!" They went on with their tour, everywhere receiving homage and followed always by the many-colored flock of parakeets and scarlet macaws.

One day, as Macunaíma lay in the shade of some trees while his brothers were fishing, the Little Negro of the Pastures, to whom he prayed daily, took pity on the victim and decided to help him. The Little Negro sent the musician wren as his messenger. Suddenly the hero heard a restless fluttering and the musician wren perched on his knee. Macunaíma made a gesture of annoyance and scared the wren away. Hardly a minute passed before he heard the noise again, and the bird perched on his belly. This time he didn't bother it. The musician wren held on and warbled with such sweetness that Macunaíma heard him out. It chanted that Macunaíma had been so unlucky as to lose his amulet on the river beach when he climbed the bergamot tree.

For this reason, lamented the wren, Macunaíma was no longer the lucky fellow he had formerly been. A turtle had swallowed the amulet, and a fisherman who had caught the turtle sold the greenstone to a Peruvian river trader called Venceslau Pietro Pietra. Since coming into possession of the talisman he had done well for himself and had become the owner of a fruitful estate down in São Paulo, that huge and uncouth city on the Tietê River.

Having told Macunaíma all this, the musician wren executed a magic figure in the air and disappeared. When the brothers returned from their fishing, Macunaíma told them, "I was walking along a trail decoying a deer that got away when I felt a cold shiver down my spine. I put my hand there and a tame centipede came out and revealed all these facts to me!"

Macunaíma then recounted all he had learned about the lost amulet and said he was minded to go to São Paulo to look for this Venceslau Pietro Pietra and get back his stolen labret. "... and may a rattlesnake build a nest if I don't track down that amulet. If you come with me, so much the better; but if you don't, fellows, there's a saying: 'Down to Gehenna or up to the throne, he travels the fastest who travels alone!' I have the reputation of a toad, that when something gets into my thick skull, it stays there. Hiccup-ho for the road, if only to call the bluff of that musician wren ... I mean, of that centipede!"

With that, Macunaíma gave a great guffaw as he thought of the slip that gave away the little bird. Maanape and Jiguê decided they had better go with him, because they knew the hero needed them to look after him.



Early the next morning Macunaíma jumped into a corial and paddled to the island of Marapatá, at the mouth of the Rio Negro, to stow his conscience where it would not be a burden to him on his travels. He hid it at the top of a thirty-foot cactus so that it wouldn't be eaten by the leaf-cutting ants. He returned to where the brothers were waiting, and at high noon the three set their course for the left verge of the Sun's realm.

One damn thing after another happened to them during this sally through thorny bush, along surging rapids, across endless rolling uplands, in ravines, down flumes where the river raced between slippery banks of white clay, through virgin forest and all the wonders of the arid backlands. Macunaíma and his brothers were on the way to São Paulo. It was the Rio Araguaia, River of the Macaws, that enabled them to make this journey. From all his previous conquests and adventures the hero had not saved a brass farthing, but the ancestral treasures bequeathed to him by Ci, the former Amazon warrior now a star in heaven, lay hidden deep in the caverns below Mount Roraima.

From this treasure Macunaíma had set aside for his venture no less than the value of forty times forty million cocoa beans, the traditional currency in those parts. He reckoned he would need a fleet of vessels to carry it, and expertly carried it was, on the Araguaia River, where they availed themselves of the art of lashing canoes together with planks on top, rather like rafts. It took altogether two hundred canoes, forming a broad arrow on

the surface of the river. In the lead stood Macunaíma, scowling grimly, questing for the city from afar. He racked his brains, trying to figure things out, while gnawing his fingers, now covered with warts from so much pointing at Ci, his star. The brothers did the paddling, scaring off the mosquitoes, and with every thrust of their paddles steering the hundreds of linked canoes. Every now and then they threw out a handful of cocoa beans onto the surface of the river, leaving a wake of chocolate on which shoals of all kinds of fish gorged themselves.

The heat of the Sun had covered the three brothers with a scum of sweat, and Macunaíma was thinking of taking a bath. However, it was impossible to bathe in the river because of the caribe fish, so ravenous that from time to time, in their efforts to bite a chunk out of an injured comrade, they leaped in shoals three feet or more out of the water. Just then Macunaíma caught sight of an islet right in the middle of the stream in which there was a hollow the shape of a giant's footprint, full of water. They landed there. The hero, squealing because the water was so cold, washed himself all over. But this water was magic water, for the hollow was St. Thomas' footprint, a relic from the time when he went around preaching and bringing the teachings of Jesus to the Indians of Brazil. When the hero had finished his bath he was white-skinned, blue-eyed and fair-haired; the holy water had washed away all his blackness; there was nothing left to show in any way that he was a son of the black tribe of Tapanhumas.

As soon as Jiguê saw this miracle he sprang into St. Thomas' footprint. But by this time the water was very dirty from the hero's ivory blackness, so although Jiguê mopped himself like mad, splashing the water in all directions, he was left the color of freshly minted bronze. Macunaíma was bothered by this and to comfort him said, "Look, brother Jiguê, you didn't become white, but at least the blackness has gone away. Half a loaf is better than no bread!"

Then Maanape went to wash, but Jiguê had splashed all the water out of the pool. There was only a cupful left at the bottom, so that Maanape could wet only the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet. That's why he remained black like a good son of

the Tapanhuma tribe with only the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet pink after their washing in holy water. This grieved Macunaíma, who consoled him by saying, "Don't be vexed, brother Maanape, don't let it get you down! Worse things happen at sea!"

The three brothers made a superb picture standing erect and naked on the rock in the sun; one fair, one red-skinned, one black. All the denizens of the forest looked at them in amazement. The black cayman, the lesser cayman, the spectacled alligator, the yellow-bellied alligator, all the saurians lurking in the river turned their eyes onto the islet. In the branches of the riverside trees, from the mimosa, the trumpetwood, the long John and the wild cotton, and peering through the foliage of the caper bushes and giant arum lilies were all kinds of monkey: capuchins, sakiwinkies, howler monkeys, often called baboons, the black spider monkeys, the squirrel monkeys, quattas, marmosets and tamarins, all watching and drooling with envy. And the thrushes too: the Sabian thrush, the red-bellied thrush, the mockingbird, the song thrush, the yellow-legged, the pale-eyed, the black-billed, the white-necked and Swainson's thrushes, all of them were perching there, entranced with admiration, forgetful of ending their songs, singing, whistling, piping, twittering, warbling, caroling and trilling with eloquence. Macunaíma loathed all this hullabaloo. He put his hands on his hips and bawled to the wild, "Will you cut that out!" The wild creatures dispersed to feed and the brothers continued on their way.

However, they were entering the country of the river Tietê, where boodle regulates everything and the traditional money is no longer cocoa beans but what is described at various times as cash, coin of the realm, gold, dollars, pelf, lucre, dough, jack, brass, bullion, tin, sterling, boodle, farthings, joeys, tiddlers, tanners, bobs, florins, half-crowns, pence, quids, fivers, ponies, monkeys, dimes, quarters, fins, greenbacks, frogskins, bucks, iron men and zacs; where one cannot buy garters for stockings for less than twenty thousand cocoa beans. Macunaíma was much dismayed by this discovery. He might even have to work for a living; he, the hero! In botheration he grumbled, "Aw, what

a fucking life!" and thought of throwing in his hand and returning to his birthplace, of which he was emperor. But Maanape broke in, "Stop your whining, brother! If a crab dies, the whole mudflat doesn't go into mourning. Don't worry, I'll fix things for you!"

When they arrived at São Paulo they put aside some of their stock in bags as a nest egg and traded the rest on the Produce Exchange, cleaning up nearly eighty thousand milreis. Maanape was a sorcerer. Eighty thousand milreis was not a fortune, but after giving it much thought, the hero declared to his brothers, "Patience! A chap could make ends meet pretty well on that. Don't forget that a man who insists on a horse without a blemish finds himself riding Shanks' mare!" Thus it was that on this trifle Macunaíma lived.

It had been a cool evening when the brothers neared the great city of São Paulo, spread out along the banks of the river Tietê. The first thing to be heard was the screeching of the imperial flock of parrots and macaws overhead bidding the hero farewell. With that the many-colored escort wheeled around and turned back to the forests of the North.

The brothers had entered a broad savanna, which seemed at first sight to be dotted with clusters of tall palm trees—royal palms, oil palms, troolie palms, toddy palms, macaw palms, cheesy palms and cabbage palms—all bearing a plume of smoke in place of fronds, and spathes bearing palm fruit and nuts. All the stars had come down out of the damp and cloudy sky and were careering about the city. They reminded Macunaíma to look for Ci. He could never forget her now because of the magic hammock, made for love-making, which she had woven from her own hair, thus making the weaver unforgettable. Macunaíma searched and searched, but the streets were crowded with women so fair, so white, so spotlessly white, so . . . Macunaíma groaned aloud. He brushed up against the women as they passed, and murmured sweetly, "Mani! Mani! Daughters of Manioc!" referring to the magic birth to a daughter of an Indian chief of Mani, a white child from whose grave the first manioc plant had sprouted. So much blond beauty made him randy as hell. Finally

he picked up three of them. He made love with them in a strange kind of hammock spread out on the floor, in a hut taller than Paranaguá Mountain. Macunaíma found the strange hammock very hard and went to sleep stretched out across the bodies of the three women. And that night cost him four hundred milreis.

The hero's mind was in a turmoil. He had been woken by the roaring of the packs of strange animals there below in the street, vanishing between the terrible tall hutments. And there was that devil of a one-armed monkey that lifted one up to the top in a thing as big as a palm-frond sleeping hut! What a world of raucous goblins acting in such an extraordinary way with such creakings and groanings coming from their diseased tissues; what a world of demoniac spirits, of ghosts making mysterious noises, of enchanted crippled dwarfs, of will-o'-the-wisps; in byways, in underground dens, on ropes leading up hillside perforated with grottoes out of which streamed white people, whiter people, people whiter than white, surely the Sisterhood of Manioc.

The mind of the hero continued to spin with all these novel experiences. The women, laughing, taught him that the long-armed monkey wasn't a monkey at all but was called an elevator, a kind of machine contraption. From early in the morning they taught him that all those whistles, shrieks, sighs, roarings and gruntings were not at all what he thought, but were called bells, klaxons, hooters, buzzers and sirens; they were all machine contraptions. The giant anteaters grinding along, the will-o'-the-wisps, the royal palms with plumes of smoke were really contraptions such as trucks, trams, trolley buses, advertising signs, clocks, headlights, radios, motorcycles, telephones, mailboxes, chimneys; the brown and black pumas leaping along the streets were not really jaguars leaping on their prey, they were called Fords, Hupmobiles, Chevrolets and Dodges and were automobile contraptions; everything in the city was some kind of machine contraption. The hero learned to keep his mouth shut even at times when he was frightened. He went back to the practice of keeping quite still, watching, listening, plotting, in an awe-stricken daydream. A regard blended with envy grew in him for this powerful goddess with such outstanding drive, whom the

Daughters of Manioc called Machine, whose voice, more strident even than the Water-Mamma's, made such a contribution to the overwhelming din.

He made up his mind to go and make love to this Goddess of the Machine in order to become emperor over the Daughters of Manioc also. But the three girls roared with laughter at this notion, telling him that this dream of goddesses was based on an ancient puffed-up sham, that there was no such thing as a god, and that nobody could make love with a machine contraption; it would kill him if he tried. They told him that no machine contraption was a goddess, that they lacked those distinctive feminine features of which he was so fond. They said that all machine contraptions were made by man and worked by electricity, by fire, by wind, by water; man making use of the forces of nature. However, wild horses couldn't bring the hero to believe this.

He rose from the bed, and with a sweeping gesture of disdain—bahl!—he struck his right arm, bent at the elbow, with his left forearm and jerked his right fist rudely at the three trolls. It was at that instant, so they say, that he invented that notorious Brazilian offensive gesture—the banana!

He went with his brothers to live in a boarding house. One result of that first night of love, São Paulo style, was that his mouth became filled with sores. He kept moaning with the pain and could think of no cure until Maanape pinched a key from a shrine and gave it to Macunaíma to suck. The hero sucked it night and day, and indeed the sores healed well. Maanape was a sorcerer.

Macunaíma spent a whole week without eating and without making love; doing nothing but ruminate on the fruitless struggles of the Children of Manioc with the Machine. The Machine killed men, yet it was men who commanded the Machine. It has been proved to his amazement that the Children of Manioc had mastered the Machine without magic and without force; without wanting to and without distaste, incapable of explaining these miseries to themselves. These thoughts made him homesick until one night, in the company of his brothers on a balcony hanging from a skyscraper, Macunaíma wound up with a

clinger: "The Children of Manioc can't beat the Machine in this struggle, nor can the Machine beat them. It's a draw!"

He couldn't come to any other conclusion because he wasn't yet used to reasoning things out, but he was guessing—confusedly!—that the Machine could become a god out of man's control simply because it was not made in the form of a beautiful enchantress, understandable but hardly a reality in this world. Out of all the mixed-up thoughts churning around in his mind, just one shone like a ray of light in the dark: "It's men who are machines and machines who are men!" Macunaíma gave a great guffaw. He felt free again, and his spirits lifted enormously. He turned Jigüé into a telephone machine contraption, rang up a night club and ordered lobsters and a selection of French tarts to be sent over.

The morning after this carouse he felt so whacked that homesickness overcame him again. He remembered his lost amulet and decided he must do something about it at once because it is always the first blow that kills the snake.

Venceslau Pietro Pietra lived in a magnificent country "cottage" at the end of Maranhão Street, facing the cool wooded hillside of Pacaembu. Macunaíma said he would stop by to get to know Venceslau Pietro Pietra. Maanape advised against this move, pointing out the hazards of going there, because the merchant was one of those who walked with his heels in front, and if God gave him a sign, he would certainly get the message. There was no doubt he was an evil and vicious person. Very likely he was the giant, Piaiman, Eater of Men.

Macunaíma didn't want to listen to any of this. He said, "Then I'll go there on my own. Where I'm known, I'm thought well of. Where I'm not, who cares!"

In the end, Maanape went with his brother.

Behind the merchant's dwelling rose the Tree of Life, a huge and lofty silk-cotton tree on which were growing all kinds of fruit: ambarellas and sapodillas, pineapples and star apples, sweetsops and soursops, Surinam cherries and stinkberries, jambos and mangoes, avocado pears and cashew pears, bananas

and guavas, durians with the smell of a black man's armpit and the taste of ambrosia, every kind of fruit there is; and mightily high into the bargain. The two brothers were very hungry, so they made themselves a shield from leaves cut by the ants and hid on the lowest branch of the tree to pick off the game feeding on the fallen fruit. Maanape warned Macunaíma, "Look, if you hear a birdcall, don't reply, brother, or it's farewell to my spell!" The hero nodded agreement.

Maanape shot with his blowgun and Macunaíma collected the catch behind his shield. The game fell with a thud and Macunaíma picked up capuchin and tamarin monkeys, tinamou, guan and marudi bush fowl, toucans, and all those kinds of flesh and fowl one finds aboveground in trees. The thudding woke Venceslau Pietro Pietra from his midday forty winks, and he came out to see what was going on. Venceslau Pietro Pietra was the giant, Piaiman, Eater of Men. He stood at the door of his house and called, imitating a bird, "Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" as if from far away.

Macunaíma at once replied, "Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" Maanape knew the danger and whispered, "Hide yourself, brother!" The hero hid behind his screen of leaves among the dead game and the ants.

The giant came closer. "Who answered?"

Maanape replied, "Don't know!"

Thirteen times this rally took place. Then the giant said, "It was a man. Show me who it was."

Maanape threw down a dead monkey, Piaiman swallowed it and said again, "It was a man. Show me who it was." Then he spotted the hidden hero's little finger and puffed a dart at it. A long-drawn-out gasp was heard: "Aaaaaaaaghi!" and Macunaíma crumpled up with the arrow buried in his heart. The giant shouted to Maanape, "Throw down that man I've hit!"

Maanape threw down monkeys and tinamou and bush turkeys and all sorts of game they had got, and Piaiman swallowed them all, repeatedly asking for the man he had shot with his dart. Maanape didn't want to give him the hero's body and kept on

throwing down more of their catch. They went on for a long time like this, and meanwhile Macunaíma died.

At last Piaiman gave a terrifying roar: "Maanape, my dear fellow, stop this twaddle! Throw down that man I hit or I'll kill you, you old rascal!"

Maanape still felt reluctant to throw down his brother's body, but being at his wit's end, he threw down six carcasses of game all at once: a guan, a tinamou, a macaque, a piping guan, a guinea hen and a spurwing. He threw them down, saying, "There! I've thrown a six for you!"

Piaiman remained unmollified. He uprooted four great forest trees with hard, tough timber, and with them climbed up to where Maanape sat at the top of the tall silk-cotton tree. "Get the hell out of here, you dirty little shit!" he snarled. "An alligator has no neck and an ant no balls; as for me, I have four tree trunks as fingernails, you twister!" This really scared Maanape, who threw down the hero with a crash onto the ground. It was thus that Maanape and Piaiman invented that sublime card game called "stick or twist" or pontoon.

Piaiman calmed down. "That's the man!" he exclaimed, and grabbing the corpse by one leg, he hauled it into his house.

Maanape climbed down the tree, overwhelmed with chagrin. As he followed his brother's remains, a tiny reddish albino ant called Cambigique met him and asked, "What are you doing here, partner?"

"I'm following the giant who killed my brother."

"I'll come too."

As Cambigique went along he sucked up all the drops of the hero's blood which were spattered over branches and on the ground, thus showing Maanape the trail.

They entered the house, crossed the hall and the dining room, passed the butler's pantry, went out onto the terrace at the other side and stopped at the top of the cellar steps. Maanape lit a torch of candlewood and was able to see his way down the dark stairs. Right under the cellar door, which was locked, was the last drop of blood. Maanape scratched his nose and asked Cambigique, "What now?"

Just at that moment the louse Zlezlegue slid from under the door and asked Maanape, "And now what, partner?"

"I'm following the giant who killed my brother."

"All right. Just shut your eyes, partner," replied Zlezlegue. Maanape shut them. "Open your eyes, partner."

Maanape opened them and saw that the louse Zlezlegue had turned himself into a Yale key. Maanape picked up the key from the floor and opened the cellar door. Zlezlegue turned himself back into a louse again and told Maanape, "With the aid of the bottles on the top shelf you can overcome Piaiman!" and disappeared.

Maanape took down a dozen bottles and opened them. A fragrant bouquet rose from the open bottles; they contained that far-famed wine Chianti. Maanape took them into the other cellar room, which had been outfitted as a bar. The giant was in there with his wife, a nasty old hag from the bush, always smoking a pipe and very greedy. Maanape served the wine to Venceslau Pietro Pietra and gave a fistful of Rupununi shag, very powerful stuff, to the old harriidan, Ceiuci. Soon the couple were dead to the world.

The hero, chopped into twenty times thirty little scraps, was bubbling away in a thick stew. Maanape fished out the scraps of flesh and the bones, spreading them on the cement floor to cool. Meanwhile the albino ant Cambigique sprinkled them with the blood he had lapped up. Maanape then wrapped all the bloody bits and pieces in banana leaves, put the bundle in his quake and carried it to his lodgings. On arrival, he set the quake on its feet and blew smoke into it; Macunaíma emerged from the wrappings feeling weak at the knees. Maanape gave his brother some guarana to drink; this soon brought him around, and before long he was hale and hearty again. He scared off the mosquitoes and inquired, "What on earth happened to me?"

"Well now, I warned you, didn't I? I told you not to reply to any bird's song. I did indeed. But then . . ."

The next day Macunaíma woke up with scarlet fever, and he spent all the time when he had a high temperature imagining that he must get some machine contraption, some kind of firearm,

with which to kill Venceslau Pietro Pietra. As soon as he recovered he went off to the Englishmen's house to ask for a Smith & Wesson revolver contraption.

The Englishmen said, "Hm, pistols are a bit unripe as yet, but we'll go and see if there are any ready to pick." So they walked to the foot of a pistol tree. The Englishmen said, "You stand here and wait a moment. If a pistol falls, catch it; on no account let it drop to the ground!" The Englishmen shook the tree and shook it again, and a ripe pistol fell. "That's a good one!" they said.

Macunaíma thanked them and went away. He would have liked the others to believe he spoke English, though in fact the only word he knew was "sweetheart"; it was the other brothers who could speak English.

Maanape said they still needed bullets and whisky. Macunaíma suggested, "You don't speak English that well, brother Maanape; it's a cruel journey there and back, I've been there. Probably if you asked for bullets, they'd give you a lemon. It's better that I go."

So he went to talk to the Englishmen again. The Englishmen were there under the pistol tree shaking it, shaking it like mad, but nothing more had fallen, not a single pistol. They went to a bullet tree, and when the Englishmen shook it the bullets fairly rained down, more than they wanted. So Macunaíma let them fall and picked up as many as he wanted.

"Now for the whisky!" he said. They went to a Scotch fir, the Englishmen shook it and two cases of Scotch fell, which Macunaíma caught in midair.

He thanked the Englishmen and returned to his digs. When he got there he hid the whisky under his bed, saying to his brothers, "I spoke English to them, brothers, but today they had neither pistols nor whisky because a swarm of tiger ants had invaded their orchard and eaten everything. I've brought back some bullets, though. Now I'm handing my pistol over to you, and if anyone thwarts me, you shoot!"

Then he turned Jigué into a telephone contraption again, got connected with the giant and made abusive remarks to his mother.

VI

The French Lady and the Giant



Maanape had become very fond of drinking coffee, and Jigué of dozing off. Macunaíma wanted to get on with building a palm-thatched hut for the three of them to live in; but his hut was never finished. His plans for the three brothers to work together on this were thwarted by Jigué's tendency to sleep all day and Maanape's continual coffee drinking. The hero became fed up with them. He took a spoon, turned it into a brown bug and said to it, "Now, you stay buried under the coffee grounds, and when brother Maanape comes in to have a sip, you bite his tongue."

Next he took a wad of cotton and turned it into a white bug. He said, "Now, you stay hidden under the fringe of that hammock, and when brother Jigué settles there for a nap, you suck his blood."

Maanape was already on his way into the digs for another cup of coffee. The bug stung his tongue painfully. "Ouch!" cried Maanape.

Macunaíma, very slyly, said, "Something hurting you, brother? When a gnat stings me, I don't feel it!"

Maanape was annoyed. He hurled the bug as far away as he could, growling, "Gerrou, you bloody pest!"

Then Jigué came into the digs for forty winks. The white bug sucked so much of his blood that it turned pink. "Hey!" yelled Jigué.

Macunaíma commented, "Are you in pain, brother? Pooh! When a bug sucks me, I like it!"

Jigué was peeved and chucked the bug as far away as he could, saying, "Gerrout, you Bloody pest!"

Then the brothers went out to get on with building the hut. Maanape and Jigué were on one side and Macunaíma on the other, catching the bricks the others chucked up to him. Maanape and Jigué were still fuming and just biding their time to get back at their brother, and the hero had not caught wind of the trouble brewing. Jigué picked up a brick, but to make it less lethal he turned it into a hard leather ball, which he passed to Maanape, who with a deft kick lofted it over to hit Macunaíma smack on the nose. "Ugh!" spluttered the hero.

The brothers slyly called out, "How now, brother, are you in pain? Since when did it hurt a man to be hit by a ball?"

Macunaíma was furious and punted the ball as far away as he could. "Gerrout, you Bloody pest!" he roared.

He stalked across to where the brothers stood and barked, "No more work on this hut!" and he turned bricks, stones, tiles and tools into a swarm of leaf-cutting ants that showered down on São Paulo for three days. The first bug fell in Campinas, miles away; it was a caterpillar. The second bug fell thereabouts too, it was a woolly bear; the leather ball fell in a field. It was thus that Maanape introduced the coffee bug, Jigué the cotton boll weevil, and Macunaíma the football; three of the main pests in the country today.

The next morning, after thinking about his torturing she-devil, Ci, it dawned on the hero that he had been outwitted by the giant and that he could never show his face again in Maranhão Street because Venceslau Pietro Pietra now knew him too well. He kept turning things over in his mind, and by three o'clock in the afternoon an idea came to him. He had decided to trick the giant. He turned Jigué into a telephone contraption, and threading a bamboo flute into his windpipe, he called Venceslau Pietro Pietra and told him that a Frenchwoman wished to interview him about a business-machine contraption. The giant replied that that would be fine, and to come as soon as possible as his wife, the old hag Ceiuci, had gone out with their two daughters, and he could talk business more freely in their absence.

So Macunaíma went to borrow all kinds of feminine finery and beauty aids from his landlady. A contraption called rouge, silk-stocking contraptions, underwear contraptions with a bewitching fragrance, a sash contraption perfumed with aromatic grass, a gown contraption with a deeply plunging neckline, all dewy with patchouli, and a pair of white lace mitten contraptions. He glued two banana-plant buds to his chest to serve as breasts, and he made up his eyes with the blue dye from the purpleheart tree to make them look voluptuous. He decked himself out in all these faldral contraptions, then drenched himself with that enchanting perfume from acacia leaves which transports people straight to heaven. The overall effect was, to say the least, gaudy; the hero had become a crude imitation of a French tart. Finally, as a protection against being bewitched himself, he pinned to his bosom a sprig of purge pine. In this guise he set out for the palace of Venceslau Pietro Pietra. This Venceslau Pietro Pietra was the giant, Piaiman, Eater of Men.

As he was leaving his digs, Macunaíma saw a scissor-tailed hummingbird. He did not like this bad omen at all and almost gave up all thought of his rendezvous, but feeling himself bound by his appointment, he conjured up a spell to exorcise himself, and went on.

On arrival he—the Frenchwoman—was met by the giant waiting at the gate. After a good deal of introductory bowing and scraping, Piaiman picked off her ticks for her and escorted her to a luxurious pergola with uprights of polished partridge-wood and beams of red laurel. The floor was a parquet of red and golden satinwood. This alcove was rigged out with the famous white Maranhão hammocks, while right in the center stood a table of carved jacaranda displaying pink-and-white pottery from Breves and ceramics from Belém arranged on a white lace tablecloth bobbed from banana-leaf fiber.

In great tureens brought from the chamber tombs of the river Cunani, a variety of dishes were steaming: a shrimp bisque thickened with tapioca and seasoned with pepper and cassareep; a cannibal soup made from the body of a meat porter frozen overnight in a São Paulo cold storage; a stew made from al-

ligator shinbones; and corn mush. The wines were: a costly Puro de Ica from Iquitos; Correia's genuine Spanish port from Georgetown; an eighty-year-old piwari; a well-chilled champagne from São Paulo; and a genip cordial which, though renowned, tasted as dull as dishwater—like three rainy days at the seaside. There were yet more delicacies displayed with tasteful art on a multitude of paper doilies: splendid Falchi bonbons and Rio Grande cookies heaped in those lustrous black calabashes that come from Monte Alegre, and have designs carved on them with a penknife.

The Frenchwoman lolled in one of the hammocks and with gracious gestures dug into the grub. She was peckish and did herself proud. Taking a glass of Puro to wash it all down, she bethought herself to keep her eyes peeled while making the opening moves in this game. It was not long before she got around to asking if it was true that the giant really owned a talisman in the shape of an alligator. The giant went inside and came back with a conch shell in his hand. From inside the shell he drew a greenstone: it was the amulet! Macunaíma felt cold shivers run up his spine and nearly burst into tears from the surge of emotion, but he hid his feelings and asked if the giant would like to sell the stone. Venceslau Pietro Pietra, with a meaning wink, said he would neither sell the stone nor give it away. The Frenchwoman implored him to let her take it home on loan.

Venceslau Pietro Pietra, with another meaning wink, said he wouldn't lend the stone either. "Do you really think, my dear Frenchwoman, that I would hand it over to you and laugh it off, just like that?"

"But I want that stone ever so much!"

"You can keep on wanting it!"

"It's all the same to me, I'm sure, my dear dealer!"

"Dealer, fiddlesticks, Frenchwoman! Take that word back.

I'm a collector, that's what I am!"

He went inside again and returned carrying a great wicker clothes basket almost full of stones. There were turquoises,

emeralds, beryls, polished agate, needle-shaped crystals of magnetic iron oxide, chrysolite in tinkling drops of golden glass, corundum, lapis lazuli, quartz pebbles like pigeon's eggs, some of the gravel the pork-knockers call "horse bones" that indicates the possibility of diamonds, ax heads and knives of polished diorite, arrowheads of knapped flint, West African fetishes, petrified elephants, Greek columns, Egyptian goddesses, Javanese Buddhas, Mexican stelae, gold nuggets from Guyana, bird-shaped stones from Iguape, opals from Alegre creek, rubies and garnets from the river Gurupi, touchstones from the River of Herons, micaceous itacolumite, tourmalines from Vupabuçu, blocks of titania from the river Piriá, bauxite from the Great Macaque River, limestone fossils from Pirabas, pearls from Cametá, a petroglyph from Calamare, and the huge boulder that Oaque, the Father of the Toucans, shot from his blowgun to the top of that mountain; all these stones were mixed up in the hamper.

Then Piainan explained to the Frenchwoman that he was a well-known collector, a collector of stones. And the French lady was really Macunaíma, the hero. Piainan declared that the jewel of his collection was that very amulet in the form of an alligator which he had bought for a thousand cruzeiros there on the beach of the Jaciuruá lagoon. All this was a nancy-story that the giant made up.

He came and sat in the hammock, very close, affectionately close to the Frenchwoman and murmured in her ear that with him, it was all or nothing. He wouldn't lend her the stone; however, he might feel willing to give it to her. "It all depends . . .!" he cooed. The giant had reached that stage when he felt compelled to make a pass at the Frenchwoman.

When, judging from the phrase "It all depends!" the hero realized what Piainan's behavior was leading to, he began to get cold feet. Saying to himself, "Hell's bells, he thinks that I really am a French tart. *Piss off, you saucy Peruvian!*" he jumped up and ran into the garden, the giant chasing after him. The Frenchwoman swerved behind a bush in order to hide, but

there was a little Negress there blocking the way. Macunaíma, not grasping who she was, whispered to her, "Catharina, let me pass!"

The Negress stayed put. Macunaíma, already more than a little annoyed with her, growled at her, "Catharina, let me pass or I'll slap you!"

Catharina didn't budge. Macunaíma gave the wretched creature a slap in the face, and his hand stuck to her. "Catharina, let go of my hand and get out of my way or I'll give you another wallop, I'm telling you!"

Catharina was in fact only a large dummy made from carnauba wax, which is very sticky, put there by the giant. It stood there motionless. Macunaíma dealt it another slap with his free hand, which was also imprisoned. "Catharina, Catharina! Let go of my hands, kinky-hair, or I'll kick the stuffing out of you!" He gave it a kick and his foot was held fast. At last the hero got himself completely glued to the sticky dummy.

At this point Piainan arrived with a basket. He plucked the Frenchwoman from the trap and shouted to the basket, "Open your mouth, basket, open your big mouth!" The basket opened and the giant stuffed the hero in. The basket closed again, Piainan picked it up and went back to the house with it.

The handbag that the Frenchwoman had brought with her was one of those cylindrical cases, woven with fine strips of split cane and waterproofed with pitch, which the Indians use for carrying the poisoned darts for their blowguns. The giant, having set down the basket beside the front door, disappeared into the house to put the dart case in with his collection of curios. This case was impregnated with the fetid smell of game, which made the giant suspicious; and he asked it, "Is your mother as fat and smelly as you are, creature?" And he rolled his eyes with relish. He had mistaken the dart case for the Frenchwoman's little boy.

The French tart was of course really Macunaíma. Shut up there in the basket, he heard the giant's question and his teeth began to chatter with fright. "Perhaps Venceslau thinks I've walked under a rainbow and changed my sex! What a thing, man! Who'd believe it?" Pursing his lips, he puffed out some

powder made from the roots of the silk-cotton tree which has the power of loosening cords. This undid the ties of the basket, and he jumped out.

As he fled, the giant's dog, called Xaréu after a fish that cures rabies, picked up his scent. The hero was terrified and rushed off helter-skelter with the dog chasing him. They ran and they ran. They ran through a desert, they ran through some mountains, they ran to the Peak of Calabouço; they ran through the salt-pans, they ran through the reed beds, they ran in the direction of Guajurá Mirim; then they turned to the east—they had to. They ran to the island of Itamaracá, where the hero ate some mangoes, a dozen jasmín mangoes that had sprung from the grave of the late Dona Sancha; they turned to the southwest and ran up the highlands in sight of Barbacena. The hero saw a milch cow up a steep and stony bridle path and rested there to have a drink of milk. The cow was a zebu and wouldn't let him milk her till he prayed to St. Anthony and the Blessed Virgin Mary to help him. He knew that the gentle cows give milk upon first asking, while the wilder cows give milk only if it suits them. The cow found the good will to give a pail of milk to him, and the hero scampered southward. He crossed the river Paraná and turned back from the pampas. He would have liked to climb a pine but the dog barked right behind him; he swerved away from chestnut trees and tonka beans and fiddlewoods, though easier to climb, and shouted at them, "Away with you, trees!"

The dog was snapping at his heels as he passed the town of Serra in the state of Espírito Santo. There he nearly crashed into a carved and painted boulder which bore designs he couldn't understand. He thought it might have gold beneath; alas! he couldn't linger, he couldn't. He reached the muddy riverbank beyond Banana Island, and there he saw a termite hill as high as any lighthouse; it had an eyelike entrance hole, which opened just in front of him and in he plunged. He worried his way inside it and hid right at the summit, but he'd dropped a tiny silver chain and the dog sat watching near it. Up came Piainan, who saw the piece of silver chain and muttered, "This is where my treasure is!" and sent Xaréu away. The giant wrenched up a

royal palm as clean as any whistle, he broke right off its crowning spike and poked it up the anthill. He hoped he'd flush the French tart out, but wild horses wouldn't drag her! She sat impaled on the royal spike and wouldn't budge an inch. The giant found some fire ants, the kind giants use for pepper, and put them in the anthill to bite the hero's bottom, but he wouldn't budge an inch.

Piainan flung aside the useless ants and lost his temper. He swore he'd have the hero's blood and yelled at Macunaíma, "I'm going to find a fer-de-lance, and bet that it will fix you!"

This threat sufficed to freeze the hero's blood because he knew that no one can hope to best a fer-de-lance with music or with magic. He called down to the angry giant, "Just wait a tick, I'm coming!" But first he stripped off the banana buds that made his bulgy bosom, pushed them halfway outside the hole and shouted to the giant, "Discard these first!"

The giant shook so with furious rage that the hero could feel it. He threw the buds three leagues away without a moment's thinking.

The hero peeled off his clothes, the plunging-neckline gown contraption, and called out to the giant, "Now these, please!" and then put out his high-heeled pumps, his sash, and all his other feminine contraptions. The giant simply hurled them away and never even looked at one.

Then the hero, very gently, shoved his bum right in the hole and calmly asked the giant, "Now chuck this stinking calabash as far as you can throw it!"

Still blind with rage, Piainan grabbed the hero's arse and threw it, with the hero, a league and a half away and never even looked at it. He stayed there by the hole and waited for a month of Sundays, long after the hero was picking daisies by the roadside on his way home.

The hero arrived back at the digs, his tail between his legs, spent and ready to eat humble pie. He was scratched and sweating, with bloodshot eyes, fed up to the teeth with his futile exertions. He rested a bit, and then, realizing how hungry he was, he had for dinner a dish of fried mussels from Maceió, and

a cold duck, Marajó style with cashew-nut sauce. He hit the hay.

Macunaíma felt terribly let down. Venceslau Pietro Pietra was an eminent collector and he was not. He went hot and cold with envy and decided at last that he would have to take a leaf out of the giant's book. However, he would get no joy out of collecting stones because he already had plenty of that kind of crap on his own land, on the stony peaks, on the boulder-strewn savannas, in rapids, in narrow passes and on lofty screes. All these stones had once been alive, as wasps, ticks, animals, songbirds, men and women, young women and girls, even those portions of a woman that excite a man's depravity . . . ! Whatever use would more stones be, too heavy to carry around. He stretched his arms lazily and murmured, "Aw! What a fucking life!"

He went on cudgeling his brains till they rattled, then made up his mind. He would make a collection of all the smutty words he was so fond of using. Knitting his brow, in an instant he recalled hosts of them; some from living languages and those he had picked up from Latin and Greek. The Italian section lacked in nothing, with rude and dirty words for all the hours of the day in every day of the year; for every turn in the events of life and human emotion; each was a novel obscenity. But the gem of his collection was an ineffable Hindu fantasy.



Macunaíma was feeling very grouchy. His failure to bring home the amulet filled him with rancor. Perhaps it would be best to kill Piaiman . . . He went for a walk in What's-its-name Park to try his mettle. He roamed over a league and a half of forest before spotting a paddlewood tree so high that the top was out of sight. He thrust his arm under one of the buttresses and gave a hefty yank to try and pull the tree out of the ground; but the topmost leaves were swayed only by the wind.

"I still don't have the strength I need," reflected Macunaíma. He took a sharp tooth, which had been taken from a cane rat, and gashed his leg with it, following the rules for those suffering from weakness, then returned to the boarding house, still bleeding. He was so sunk in gloom over his feebleness that he stumbled into a hole in the road which tripped him up. The sudden twinge of pain made the hero lift his eyes to the stars above, and among them he saw Capei, the Moon, on the wane and circled by a halo.

"When the Moon's on the wane, to start is in vain!" he remembered sadly; the thought gave him some comfort.

The next day, the weather being bitterly cold, the hero made up his mind to get even with Venceslau Pietro Pietra by getting him a thrashing that would really warm up his hide for him, and no mistake. But he was still afraid of the giant because he was lacking his full strength, so he decided to take the train to Rio and seek the help of Exu, the powerful devil from Africa, in

whose honor a macumba rite was to be held the following day.

As it was June, the weather was bitterly cold. The macumba ceremony was to take place down at the Mangue on the premises of Aunt Ciata, a witch without equal, a famous sorceress, Mother-of-Saints, and singer to her own guitar. At eight in the evening Macunaíma arrived at her place, carrying on his shoulder the obligatory demijohn of cheap rum. There was already a crowd of people there, poor people, honest people, lawyers, waiters, stonemasons, bricklayers' mates, speculating councilors, all manner of men; and the affair was ready to begin.

Macunaíma took off his shoes and socks like the rest and hung around his neck a charm made from wasps' wax and the dried roots of the nanceberry tree, good against snake bite and fever. He went into the crowded hall, and brushing off the swarms of mosquitoes coming from the bedroom, respectfully greeted the macumba priestess who was sitting motionless on a three-legged stool, not speaking to anyone. Aunt Ciata was a gaunt old Negro woman with a wizened face on which were engraved a hundred years of suffering, and whose untidy mop of white hair formed a halo encircling her tiny head. No one managed to catch her eye; she seemed to be just a bag of bones dreamily swaying toward the floor of stamped earth.

A boy goes around, a son of Ochong—a son, they say, of Our Lady of the Conception, whose rites are held in December. He distributes candles, a lit candle to each of the sailors, joiners, journalists, fat cats, sham engineers, hussies and customs clerks, plenty of them! to all these people; then he turns down the gas jets lighting the little hall.

Then the macumba rite started in earnest with a processional litany recited to pay respect to the saints. It went like this: At the head was a marshal beating a wooden drum, a huge pockmarked Negro, son of Ogun, ballad singer by profession, named Olelé Rui Barbosa. He slapped the drum fitfully, maintaining an intricate rhythm which controlled the whole procession. Onto the walls covered with flowered paper, candlelight cast great flickering shadows like wandering ghosts. After the drum marshal came Aunt Ciata, almost without movement, her lips puckered in a

monotonous chant; then followed the shysters, the ships' stewards, the quacks, the poets, the hero, some robbers, some Portuguese, some senators, everyone, all dancing and singing responses to the chant, thus: "Let . . . us . . . go . . . and greet him!"

Aunt Ciata sang the name of the saint they were honoring: "O . . . O . . . Olorung! Master of all!" and the people responded: "Let . . . us . . . go . . . and greet him!"

Aunt Ciata continued: "O . . . O . . . O . . . Botô Tucuchi! Whale of the Amazon!" and the people responded: "Let . . . us . . . go . . . and greet him!" A pause in the monotonous chant. Then:

"O . . . O . . . O . . . Yemenjá, Anamburucu and Ochon, Three Mothers of the Waters!"

"Let . . . us . . . go . . . and greet them!"

So it went until Aunt Ciata suddenly halted, and with a great gesture cried out, "Come on out, Exu! Come on out!" For Exu is a devil on crutches, a malignant demon, but good withal at bringing about wickedness. There was torment to be felt in that noisy room: "Ooh! . . . Ooh! . . . Ooh! . . . Exu! Our Father Exu!"—and the name of that devil resounded like the crack of doom, splitting the night in two. The litany continued:

"O . . . O . . . O . . . King Nagô!"

"Let . . . us . . . go . . . and greet him!" After a pause in the monotonous chant:

"O . . . O . . . O . . . Barú!"

"Let . . . us . . . go . . . and greet him!"

Suddenly Aunt Ciata stopped, and with a great gesture cried, "Come forth, Exu, come forth!" because Exu is a lame devil, a malevolent spirit; and again there was torment in that yelling mob: "Ooh! . . . Ooh! . . . Ooh! . . . Our Father Exu!"—the name of that devil echoing like a thunderclap, riving the night to tatters.

"O . . . O . . . O . . . Oxalá!"

"Let . . . us . . . go . . . and greet him!"

So it went on. They greeted every saint in the Macumba calendar: the White Porpoise, who champions love affairs;

Xangô, the god of storms, thunder and lightning; Omulu, the god of smallpox; Iroco Ochosse, the ferocious Water-Mama; Obatalá, who gives strength for prolonged love-making; all the pagan saints. Then the litany ended.

Aunt Ciata resumed her seat on her three-legged stool tucked away in a corner, and the whole sweating throng of doctors, bakers, engineers, shysters, policemen, slaves, cub reporters, muggers, and Macunaíma, came up and set their candles on the ground around the stool. The candlelight threw the motionless shadow of the Mother-of-Saints onto the ceiling. Most of them, wheezing because the air was thick with a mixture of rank smells, of cheap scent, of fish, of incense, and of everybody's sweat, had already stripped off some of their clothes. The time had come to take a drink, and it was then that Macunaíma tasted that terrible tippie for the first time whose name is not cassiri, but cachaça. He tasted it with a smacking of lips and a merry tongue, and gave a great guffaw.

During and after the drinking they went on with chants calling for help. All of them were restless, ardently wishing for a saint to appear that night. So far, none had shown up in spite of the beseeching and praying. Aunt Ciata's macumba was by no means one of those fake obeahs in which the local witch doctor, just to satisfy the audience, trumps up some mock Xangô Ochosse. It was a serious macumba rite, and when a saint materialized it was a real saint, without any trickery . . . Aunt Ciata did not allow any corrupt practices at her place, and it was more than twelve months since either Ogun or Exu had appeared at the Mangue. All those present wanted Ogun, except for Macunaíma, who wanted only Exu so that he could take revenge on Venceslau Pietro Pietra. Between shots of liquor, some of them on their knees outside the room, all these half-naked people chanted in turn the spell begging for the apparition of a saint.

At midnight they went outside to eat the goat whose head and hoofs were placed on the altar in front of an image of Exu consisting of an anthill with three cowrie shells serving for eyes and mouth. The goat had been sacrificed to that devil and spiced with powder made from its horns and the spurs of a fighting

cock. The Mother-of-Saints devoutly egged on the feasting and crossed herself three times in mockery. All the counter jumpers, book lovers, down-and-outs, dons, bankers, all those people dancing around the table were singing a Xangô refrain:

*I want to dance the bamba,
Come on, Arué,
You tattered Holy Joe;
Come on, Orobó, come on, do!*

*How this sweet-corn cake
Makes my mouth water!
Advance, Lady Yemenjá,
Away from Daddy Cossip, come on, do!*

Talking and making merry, they devoured the sacrificial goat, each of them seeking his own demijohn of rotgut because it was not allowed to drink from anyone else's. They all drank mightily of the fierce cane liquor, and Macunaíma gave great guffaws as he spilled wine on the table. This betokened great happiness for him, and everyone thought he was bound to become the saint for that blessed evening; but he was not.

The chanting had hardly got under way when he saw a woman leap into the middle of the hall, compelling everyone to silence with a sobbing wail and starting a different song. A shiver ran through everybody there; the candlelight threw onto the ceiling the shadow of the woman, seeming like a writhing monster. But it was no monster, it was Exu himself! Ogun battled on, the spanking of his drum taking up the tortured rhythm of the new song, a song in a free style full of scurrying notes with tricky syncopation; a crazy ecstasy, a low-pitched throbbing working up to a frenzy. And the overpainted Polish whore, the straps of her underwear broken, pranced in the middle of the floor, her plump body already almost naked. Her breasts were swinging loose, striking first her belly, then her shoulders, then her face—*thwack!*—like thunder. At the same time this redhead was singing, singing, singing. At last, with froth dripping from her slack lips, she uttered a piercing cry that ripped the already tattered

night to flinders; right in front of the saint the medium fell to the floor and stayed there, rigid.

Moments passed in awe-struck silence. Then Aunt Ciata rose from her stool, which a little Creole girl replaced with a new one never before sat on, as a votive offering. The priestess approached haltingly; Ogun the drum marshal came with her. All the others were standing flat against the walls. Only Aunt Ciata, with faltering steps, sidled up to the body of the whore lying there rigid, in the middle of the hall. The sorceress stripped off all her clothes and stood there naked but for the necklaces, bracelets and earrings of thousands of silver coins dangling from her bony limbs. From a calabash held out by Ogun she took some of the coagulated blood of the sacrificial goat and smeared it on the medium's head. As she sprinkled the fresh potion over it, the stiff body writhed, groaning, and the sharp smell of iodine pervaded the surroundings. The sorceress intoned a chant sacred to Exu, a labored lyrilizing, honey-sweet but fraught with boding.

When she stopped, the whore opened her eyes and began to move, but in a style quite different from before. She was no longer a woman but the incarnation of the saint, Exu. She was Exu, the devil himself, who had come to make one of his rare visits to a macumba rite.

The two women then performed an improvised and jaunty jongo dance, in which the creaking of the old aunt's bones and the bouncing of the fat one's tits combined their rhythm with the repetitive gulp and spank of the drummer. Everyone was also naked by now, and awaited the choice of the Son of Exu by the great Devil now present. The dance was terrifying . . . Macunaíma quivered with anticipation, longing to beg the devil to bring about Venceslau Pietro Pictra's downfall. Caught off guard by the unforeseen break of good luck about to open in front of him, he reeled into the middle of the room, knocking Exu over and falling on top for a triumphant fuck. The consecration of this new Son of Exu was acclaimed by all; they all howled hurrahs in honor of the new son of the devil.

Ending this ceremony, the devil was led to the stool for the

adoration to begin. The thieves, the senators, the clodhoppers, the Negroes, the soccer players, the whole bunch of them came crawling beneath the cloud of orange dust pervading the hall, knocking the ground with the left side of their heads, kissing the knees, kissing the whole body that was possessed by Exu's devilish atman. The red-haired whore, in jerking spasms, spewed froth from her mouth in which they all moistened their thumbs to bless themselves with the sign of the cross; she groaned with harsh croaking grunts, half sobbing, half gloating; she was no longer a whore but had become Exu himself, the most direful devil of the macumba cult.

After all had joined in this great play of kissing, adoration and blessing, the time had come for requests and promises. A butcher asked that people be allowed to buy the tainted meat he purveyed; Exu consented. A farmer asked that he no longer be plagued with leaf-cutting ants or malaria on his farm; Exu laughingly refused his consent. A lecher asked that his light of love be given a post as a schoolteacher so that they could afford to get married; Exu agreed to this. A doctor made a speech asking for the ability to write and speak Portuguese with elegance; Exu refused his plea. And so on. At last came Macunaíma's turn; and Macunaíma was the new son of the devil. He said, "I come to my father with a prayer because I am in great trouble."

"What is your name?" asked Exu.

"Macunaíma, the hero."

"Ho! Hum! A name starting with *Ma* is a bad sign!" the great one muttered. But he received the hero with affection and promised to do everything he could for him, because Macunaíma was his son. So the hero asked that Exu bring down hideous sufferings on Venceslau Pietro Pietra, the giant, Piainan, Eater of Men.

The happenings that followed filled the onlookers with horror. Exu took three little sprigs of lemon verbena blessed by an unfrocked priest, threw them into the air, crossed himself and commanded Venceslau Pietro Pietra's duppy to enter his, Exu's, body, there to be given condign punishment. He waited a moment and the giant's duppy came and entered the body of the

female medium; Exu told his son to give a hiding to the duppy now lodged in the whore's body. The hero seized a door bar and lashed Exu with a will. He put his heart and soul into it, and whacked and whacked again. Exu screamed:

He lashes me slowly,
How it hurts, hurts, hurts!
I also have a family
That it hurts, hurts, hurts!

At last, purple from the drubbing, bleeding from the mouth, the nose and the ears, he fell swooning to the ground. It was horrifying. Macunaíma then ordered that the giant's duppy be given a bath in boiling brine, and Exu's body steamed damply on the floor. Next Macunaíma ordered that the giant's duppy be pounded with broken glass through a mat woven of stinging nettles and the fearful barbed canes of the "hold-me-back" rattan all the way up to the high passes of the Andes in midwinter; and Exu's body, bleeding from the splinters of glass, thorn scratches and nettle rash, was gasping with fatigue and shivering with cold. It was horrifying. Then Macunaíma ordered that Venceslau Pietro Pietra's duppy be gored by a bull, kicked by a wild horse, bitten by an alligator and stung by forty times forty thousand fire ants; and Exu's body writhed on the ground, with a row of tooth marks in the leg, his skin well-nigh invisible under the bites of forty times forty thousand fire ants, with a skull cracked by a horse's kick and a hole in the belly from a sharp horn. The hall filled with an intolerable stench. And Exu groaned:

He gores me slowly,
How it hurts, hurts, hurts!
I also have a family
That it hurts, hurts, hurts!

Macunaíma went on for a long time ordering things such as these, and Venceslau Pietro Pietra's duppy suffered them in Exu's body. The hero's vindictiveness could at last invent no more, and he stopped. The female body lay unconscious on

the earthen floor, breathing only faintly. There was a weary silence. It was horrifying.

Away in São Paulo, at the Piaiman's palace in Maranhão Street, there was no end of a rumpus. Doctors came. A medical emergency team arrived. Everyone was desperate. Venceslau Pietro Pietra bled copiously, howling with pain. He displayed a horn wound in the belly, a skull fractured by what must have been a kick from a wild horse, frostbite, scalds, ant stings and tooth marks, and he was covered with bumps and bruises as from a terrific beating with a wooden stake.

The macumba rite continued in the silence of horror. Aunt Ciata took over and began to chant the devil's greatest prayer. It was, among other things, a sacrilegious prayer in which the least mistake meant death; the chant of Our Father, Exu. It went like this:

"Father Exu, who dwelleth on the sinister side of the thirteenth depth of hell, we exalt thee, all of us!"

"We exalt thee! We exalt thee!"

"Father Exu, each day henceforward, let thy will be done by us as it is thy realm of the slave ranges, for always and forever let it be thus. Amen!"

"Glory be to the homeland of Exu on the Slave Coast! Glory be to the children of Exu!"

Macunaíma gave thanks. The old aunt concluded:

"As it was in the beginning, when a slave prince became our Father Exu in centuries gone by, so it is now and for time everlasting shall be. Amen!"

"Thus shall it be forever and ever! Amen!" repeated the crowd.

Exu rose, completely healed; the spell cast when the rum was circulating had caused every wound to disappear, and the saint had turned back again into the body of the Polish whore. A great noise was heard and the stench of burning pitch filled the hall, while from her mouth the woman spat out a ring of jet. In this manner she returned from her trance, no worse for wear than extremely tired; and now she was just a fat red-headed whore again. Exu had vanished!

To bring everything to a proper end they all had a party, eating some excellent ham and dancing the samba to a loud and lively measure on the guitar, which everyone enjoyed with a good deal of freeness and revelry. Then it all ceased and they returned to real life. Macunaíma and his fellow celebrants of the macumba, including Jaime Ovalle, Dodô, Manu Bandeira, Blaise Cendrars, Ascenso Ferreira, Raul Bopp and Antônio Bento, all went out into the dawn.



While Macunaíma was going about his business he came across the very tall tree known as Voloman. Sitting on a branch was a bright green pepper shrike with red brows. On catching sight of the hero, it cleared its throat and sang, "Look who's coming down the road! Look who's coming down the road!" Macunaíma looked up intending to thank it and noticed that the tree, Voloman, the Tree of Life, was heavy with fruit. The hero had gone hungry for many hours and his belly balked at the sight of all the oranges and lemons, the sapotes and simatoos, the grapes and grenadillas, pineapples and pomegranates, mangoes and mombins, sweetop and soursop, all kinds of fruit hanging from its branches.

"Voloman, give me some of your fruit!" begged Macunaíma. The tree refused to give him any. Then Macunaíma shouted this spell, twice over, "*Boiô! Boiô! Boiô! Quizama quizu!*"

All the fruit fell from the tree and the hero stuffed himself till he was gorged. This annoyed Voloman so much that it grabbed the hero by the feet and dragged him far away, to the other side of Guanabara Bay, to a desert isle which had been inhabited in the olden days by Alamo, a nymph who came with the Dutch. Macunaíma was so tired that he just hung there asleep during the flight. Still asleep, he was landed underneath a very smelly bitter coconut palm at the top of which perched a vulture.

At that very moment this bird felt the need to perform its daily

duties and covered the hero with its filthy droppings. It was near dawn and bitterly cold. Macunaíma woke up shivering and plastered with stinking dung. He got up and searched the little rocky islet to see if there was a cave to be found with money buried in it. But there was no cave, no magic silver chain to show where Dutch treasure lay hidden. There was nothing but tiny red ants.

Just then Kaiuanog, the Morning Star, was gliding overhead. Macunaíma, already fed up with his noisome plight, begged her to carry him up to heaven. The hero was stinking so foul that Kaiuanog kept on her course. "Go jump in the lake!" she cried and glided on. In this way was born the expression "Go jump in the lake!" which Brazilians use when being rude to certain European immigrants.

Not long after, Capei, the Moon, came up. Macunaíma called to her, "Thy blessing, Godmother Moon!" "Humph!" she vouchsafed.

Then he asked her to take him to Marajó Island. The hero was smelling even worse by this time, so Capei kept on her way. "Go jump in the lake!" she cried and went on. But that catchphrase was there to stay.

Macunaíma shouted that at least Capei could give him a little fire to warm himself by. "Pester the next one!" she said, pointing to the Sun, who had just begun to rise in the distance, paddling her canoe across the vast ocean; and the Moon went away.

Macunaíma shivered and shivered, and the vulture continued to drop its dung, which always fell on the hero because the island was so small and rocky that there was nowhere else for him to go. Vei arrived, red in the face and dripping with sweat. She was Vei, the Sun. She was well disposed toward Macunaíma because at his home there were always little gifts of round cassava cakes put out on the thatch drying and for the Sun to lick.

Vei took Macunaíma aboard her sailing raft, which had a rust-red sail rot-proofed with the red juice from the nanceberry. She made her three daughters clean him up, pick off his ticks and make sure his nails were clean, setting him all to rights again. Because she was so red in the face and sweating so heavily, the

hero had not suspected that this old dame was the Sun herself, the good Sun, overcoat for the needy, and asked her if she would call for Vei to bring him warmth, as he was still shivering in spite of having been well washed. Vei was the Sun herself, and she had been wondering as she went along if she should make Macunaíma her son-in-law. But at that time in the morning she simply could not warm anyone; she didn't have the strength. To amuse him while he waited to get warm she whistled tunefully as her daughters stroked and tickled him.

He burst out in great guffaws, doubled up with the tickling and thoroughly enjoying himself. When they stopped he begged for more, squirming with bliss to come. Vei noticed the hero's shameless behavior and was not amused; she refused to pass fire from her body to warm anyone. So the girls grabbed their mother and tied her up firmly, and Macunaíma gave the leathery old bag slap after slap on her belly until at last she was made to fart fire, and everyone could warm themselves.

A gust of grateful warmth wafted the sailing raft on its way and spread out over the ocean, gilding the limpid air. Macunaíma lay back on the raft, basking like a lizard in the azure tranquillity. And silence lay over all.

"Aw! What a fucking life!" sighed the hero contentedly.

The only sound to be heard was the plashing of the wavelets. A blissful satiety mounted in Macunaíma's veins; everything was going his way. The youngest girl was tapping the great goatskin drum her mother had brought from Africa. The ocean was vast in its expanse; there wasn't a cloud in the lofty dome of the sky. Macunaíma laced his fingers behind his head, making a pillow of his hands, and while the eldest daughter of light scared off the blood-sucking flies, the third girl gently stroked the hero's belly with the tips of her plaits until he quivered with lust. He started giggling, overflowing with happiness, and pausing between verses to savor his song to the full, he crooned:

*The day I die, don't pipe your eye;
I'll leave this world without a sigh,
A crazy red-haired spade.*

*Dour exile was my cruel dad,
Harsh misery for Mum I had,
A crazy red-haired spade.*

*They both said, "Don't you ever dare
To consummate a love affair!"
A crazy red-haired spade.*

*Around my neck Ma hung a chain
Each link a pang of bitter pain,
A crazy red-haired spade.*

*Let armadillos dig their den,
A grave for me beyond man's ken,
A crazy red-haired spade.*

*In every vice a spineless slave,
The world's most miserable knave,
A crazy red-haired spade.*

Life was good . . . his skin sparkled with the dull gold of the tiny crystals of salt from the sea spray thrown up by Vei's leisurely paddling, and his body squirmed and wriggled as the girl tickled him.

"Aha! So Macunaíma enjoys our loving little pranks! Aha!"

"Gosh! What a dazzling daughter of joy! She's a stunning charmer, pals!" he exclaimed. Closing his roguish eyes, his mouth twisted into a puckish grin in mock disgust at this champion life, the hero licked his lips and went to sleep.

As the soporific rocking of Vei's floating fish trap ceased, Macunaíma woke. A rose-hued skyscraper in the distance was the first thing to catch his eye. The sailing raft had been moored alongside the quay of that sublime village, Rio de Janeiro. Stretching the length of the waterfront was a great park studded with brazilwood trees, and on both sides were colorful palaces. This boulevard was the Rio Branco Avenue. That's where Vei and her three daughters of light lived.

Vei had been thinking that perhaps Macunaíma would make her a good son-in-law because, according to the tales she had heard, he was a hero, and because he had put out on the roof thatch many round cassava cakes for her to suck while they were

drying. She said, "My son-in-law, you really ought to marry one of my daughters. I would give you Europe, France and Bahia as her dowry. But—and never forget this—you would have to stay faithful to her and stop making love to other women everywhere you go."

Macunaíma thanked her, and swore by his mother's memory to do as she said. Then Vei went out with her daughters to bring day to the vast expanses of forest, again enjoining him not to leave her sailing raft and on no account to go fooling around and making love to other wenches thereabouts. Macunaíma repeated his promise, swearing again by his mother's memory.

Vei and her three daughters had hardly vanished into the forest when Macunaíma was swamped by an overwhelming desire to go out and screw some tart or other. He lit a cigarette, but the tide of lust rose higher inside him. There under the trees he could see plenty of young colored hussies strolling to and fro, flaunting their charms; a parade of beauty and talent.

"How fire catches everything alight!" exclaimed Macunaíma. "I'm not such a milksop that a taste of one of these broads would do me any harm!"

A rocket seemed to burst in his brain. He stood upright on Vei's raft, and spreading out his arms above his country, he solemnly proclaimed:

"With fewer ants and better health
Brazil will lead the world in wealth!"

Suddenly he jumped from the raft and went to give a chaste salute to the statue of St. Anthony, who had once been captain of a regiment and had had his way with all the doxies around. Within moments he spotted a fishwife hawking her wares on a plot of land belonging to her godfather, a recently arrived Portuguese immigrant. Her skin was white and she was heavily perfumed; she reeked to high heaven of stale fish! Macunaíma gave her the glad eye; they went back to the raft to make love again and again. They made love to each other cheerfully and generously.

When Vei and her three daughters came back from daytime

and it was dusk, the girls, who were in front, found Macunaíma and the Portuguese fishwife still in an amorous embrace. The three daughters of light took violent umbrage: "So this is what you get up to, hero, is it? Didn't our mother, Vei, tell you not to leave the raft and not to go fooling around with any of those dollies in the neighborhood?"

"I was feeling real glum!" replied the hero.

"That's neither here nor there, hero! You'll get a flea in the ear from our mother, the Sun!"

They went back to their mother in high dudgeon. "Just look, Mother dear, what that precious son-in-law of yours is doing! We had hardly left for the forest when he got off with a real beauty and brought her to our raft, if you please, where they made love till they couldn't do it any more. And now they are giggling with each other!"

On hearing this, the Sun flared up in anger and upbraided him, "Now, now, now, you arrant whoreson beetle-headed flapped rascally knave! Didn't I tell you to leave those poxy bitches alone? I most certainly did! But instead, I find you grinding this . . . this creature, and on my raft too; and there you are, still at it."

"I was feeling real glum!" repeated Macunaíma.

"If you had obeyed me, you would have married one of my daughters, and you would have stayed young and very handsome forever and a day. As it is now, you'll remain young just a short time like anyone else, then you'll grow old and not be attractive at all."

Macunaíma felt like bursting into tears. He sighed, "If only I'd known . . ."

"This 'If only I'd known . . .' is a saint who was never a tittle of use to anyone, you knave. As for you, you are an immoral trickster, nothing but a thoroughly bad egg. I shall certainly not give you one of my daughters. No, I certainly will not!"

Then Macunaíma felt his own corns being trodden on: "Right now I don't want any of your three you-know-whats either! Three of them! A devil's brood; may the devil fly away with the lot of them!"

Vei, with her three daughters, swept off to look for a hotel, leaving Macunaíma to sleep with his white-skinned fishwife on the raft.

An hour before dawn, the Sun and her daughters came on their walk around the bay, finding Macunaíma and the Portuguese woman still fast asleep. Vei woke them and gave Macunaíma as a keepsake a piece of that stone called *Vató*, the flint that gives fire when one needs it. Having done this, Vei and her three daughters of light left on their daily round.

Macunaíma spent all day making love to the fishwife at various places in town. As night fell, they were dozing on a bench in Flamengo Park when a fearful ogre came up to them. It was Mianiquê-Teibê, who had come to gobble up the hero. This ogre breathed through his fingers, heard through his navel and had eyes in place of nipples. His mouth was two mouths hidden in the folds under his toes. The smell of this monster woke up Macunaíma, who ran like a stag to get away from Flamengo. So Mianiquê-Teibê made a meal of the fishwife and cleared out.

The next day Macunaíma no longer had the heart to remain in the capital of the republic. He swapped the flint *Vató*, which the Sun had given him, for a photograph in a daily newspaper, and returned to São Paulo, that Indian hamlet on the Tietê creek.

IX

Letter to the Amazons



To Our Very Dear Subjects

The Amazon Ladies

Dated this Thirtieth Day of the Month of May in the Year

One Thousand Nine Hundred and Twenty-six

São Paulo

Ladies:

Without a doubt, the address and pedantry of this our missal will astonish you not a little. It is incumbent upon us, moreover, to commence these lines of salutation and undying affection with disagreeable news. It is quite true that in this pulchritudinous city of São Paulo—the greatest in the universe, so say its prolix inhabitants—you are not known as “Icamiabas” (considered here a barbarism) but rather by the appellation of “Amazons”; and that you are, it is asseverated, belligerent and strong and riding on jennets, in the tradition of classical Hellas; so that is what you are denominated. Greatly though such extravagances of erudition grieve us, your Emperor, nevertheless you must agree with us that in this way you are apt to dwell in the mind as more heroic and more conspicuous, embellished by this respectable platina of antique purity.

But we must not dissipate your rustic time, much less perturb your apprehension with observations of inferior caliber; allow us to proceed now, immediately, to acquaint you with our deeds here in this place.

Not five suns had set after we had parted from you when the most appalling mischance happened to us. For one beautiful night in the ides of May in the year that has gone, we lost your amulet, known to you as a *muiraquitã*, otherwise spelled *muraquitã*, and by some knowledgeable pedants suspicious of unorthodox etymology written as *myrakitan*, or even *muraquitã*. Laugh not! You should know that this word, as familiar to you as are the Eustachian tubes of your own conchas, is almost unheard of here. For in this very civilized society, the warriors call themselves police, traffic cops, civic guards, boxers, sea lawyers, rabblers, and so on—these being some of the terms which are absurd neologisms; execrable trash with which the slovenly and vulgar set defiles the good Lusitanian tongue. But let us not wander from the point discoursing *sub tegmine fagi* on the Portuguese language, otherwise called the Lusitanian. What will interest you more, no doubt, is the intelligence that the warriors here do not seek out mettlesome women for epithalamic junction, but prefer them docile and willing to exchange with ease their favors for those small and deliquescent leaves of paper which the masses call dough—the *curriculum vitae* of Civilization—to which it has now become a point of honor for us to belong. Thus, the very word *muiraquitã*, which offends the Latin ears of your Emperor, is unknown to the warriors here and to everyone in general who draws breath in this region. Scarcely any “citizens of importance in morals and letters,” as they are called by the good old classical friar Luís de Souza, cited by Dr. Rui Barbosa, have deigned to bestow their illuminating glances on *muiraquitãs* except to appraise them as being of inferior worth, originating in Asia and not from your fingers, worn to the bone from polishing them.

We ourselves were still sunk in despondency on account of losing our amulet, wrought in the shape of a saurian, when—perhaps for some metaphysical reason or, who knows, provoked by some ardent libido such as Dr. Sigmund Freud (pronounced Froyd), the German savant, explains—a wondrous archangel appeared to us in a dream. From him, we now apprehend that the lost talisman is in the esteemed hands of a certain Dr.

Venceslau Pietro Pietra, a subject of the Viceroy of Peru, obviously of Florentine origin, as are the Cavalcantis of Pernambuco. And as the doctor resides here in this illustrious city, founded by Padre Anchieta, we are approaching him without delay to contrive the return of the plundered Golden Fleece. Our current relations with Dr. Venceslau are on the most satisfactory footing possible, so doubtless you will very soon receive the news that we have recovered the talisman: and for that we shall expect your tokens of grateful congratulation.

However, delectable subjects, it is incontestable that we, your Emperor, find ourselves in a serious predicament. The treasure we brought hither needed conversion into the money current in this country, and such conversion has been difficult for us to maintain due to the fluctuations on the Exchange and the depression in cocoa.

Further, you should know that the ladies of this place do not surrender to the big stick, neither do they amuse themselves with gratuitous fornication but only to the persuasion of showers of filthy lucre, ostentatious fountains of champagne, and quantities of those monstrous comestibles which are vulgarly given the name of lobster. And what enchanted monsters they are, Amazon ladies!!! From a shining roseate carapace, constructed like the hull of a ballahoo, project arms and tentacles and a paddle-shaped tail in a variety of shapes and sizes having the appearance of some complicated and important mechanism, served in a dish of Sèvres porcelain we could imagine it to be some sailing trireme tacking on the waters of the Nile while bearing in the hold the priceless mortal remains of Cleopatra.

Ponder well the accentuation of this word, Amazon ladies, for it grieves us greatly that you do not prefer, with us, this pronunciation, consistent with the teachings of the classics, to the pronunciation of Cleopatra as in the most modern diction—to which some vocabularists rashly subscribe without having perceived that it is a contemptible clamjamfrey bringing us, out of the abundance of France, the dead hand of pedlar's French.

So it is for this dedicated monster, conqueror of the most delicate and subtle palates, that the local ladies tumble onto their

nuptial couches. You must understand that we speak here only of the highest rewards; because, dearest subjects, lobsters are the dearest of all foods, and for some lobster dishes we have to shell out sixty milreis or more, which, expressed in our traditional terms, reaches the staggering total of eighty million cocoa beans. You will comprehend thus that the amount we have already spent has left us destitute of filthy lucre to make love again to these difficult ladies. We had wished to impose abstinence, painful though that might have been, upon our flaming ardor so that we could have saved you untoward expense; however, the hardy fortitude does not exist that would not yield to the allures and blandishments of such adorable shepherdesses!

They promenade attired in the sheerest voile and sparkling jewels which enhance their graceful deportment without sufficing to conceal to the least degree their charms, yielding to no one in perfection of shapeliness and high fashion. They are always immaculate, these local ladies; and they display, in making love, so much talent and so many ingenuities that to enumerate them here would, peradventure, be fulsome and would certainly break those commandments of discretion that are required of His subjects in relation to your Emperor. What loveliness! What elegance! What cachet! What flamboyant poise, inflaming, devouring! We think exclusively of them, though far from relapsing into forgetfulness of our amulet.

To us it seems, illustrious Amazons, that you could gain a great deal by learning from them this resourcefulness, these tricks and sleights of love-making. You could then put aside your proud Law of Reclusion for more amiable occupations in which the kiss becomes sublime and voluptuousness burns fiercely, gloriously demonstrating, *urbi et orbi*, the subtle power of the "*odor di fêmia*," as the Italians put it.

And now, since we dwell on this delicate subject, let us not leave it without some more observations which you may consider useful. The ladies of São Paulo, over and above being very beautiful and accomplished, do not content themselves with the gifts and excellence nature has bestowed on them; they are greatly preoccupied with themselves; they refuse to apply the

proper finishing touches unless they obtain from all parts of the globe everything that is most refined and elegant and have tried out the meretricious—we mean to say, the meritorious—feminine arts and sciences of the ancestral civilizations. Thus, they call on the mistresses of old Europe, especially of France, and with them they learn how to pass their time in ways very different from yours. Now they groom themselves, and enjoy spending hours performing this delicate operation. Now they bewitch the sociable theatergoing set. Now they do nothing whatsoever. And in these labors they contrive to pass the day in such involved and wearisome ploys that when nighttime arrives, they have barely time to make love before falling into the arms of Orpheus, as the saying goes. But you must know, cherished ladies, that here night and day diverge markedly from your marital timetable: their day commences when for you it is high noon; their night, when you are enjoying your beauty sleep, that last, most restorative hour.

All this the ladies of São Paulo learn from their instructresses from France; and more, too, than the mere growing and polishing of their fingernails. They learn readily enough, *horresco referens*, how to cultivate the finest horns on the brows of their cuckolded spouses. Let us progress from this ornate mockery!

There is much too that can be said about hairstyles, now that their crowning glory is disposed in such a virile and gracious way as to resemble the short curls of the classical Greek warriors, such as Antinous of unhappy memory, rather than in the mode favored by matrons of noble Latin lineage. We think, however, that you will agree with us on the unsuitability of long plaited pigtails here if you have paid heed to what we have said above. Since the sophisticated men about town of São Paulo do not grab their fair charmers by the hair and throw them down by brute force but cajole them with a few pieces of gold or lobster, the last mentioned style is considered vulgar; furthermore, the short hairstyle diminishes the evils to which long hair is subject, that is, in providing the abode and natural pasture for those damnable and prolific insects such as you too have among yourselves.

Not content with assimilating the subtleties and artifices of

French gallantry, according to the fashion of Louis XV, the ladies in São Paulo introduce from cruder climes anything they think adds to their attractions—for example, tiny feet from Japan, rubies from India, insolence from North America, and many other international delights and treasures.

Now we shall speak to you, by and large, of that brilliant group of ladies of Polish origin who live here and rule openly-handedly. They are unusually animated in their deportment and more numerous than the grains of sand in the ocean. Like you, dear ladies, these women form a community of their own, the men living with them being reduced to slavery and condemned to the lowly occupation of serving them. Because of this they do not call themselves men, but respond to the barbarism "*Garçon!*" They are very polite and quiet, and always wear the same unobtrusive livery.

These women live cloistered together in the same area, called the brothel quarter or the red-light district; it is significant that the afterbirth of these expressions is not polite and would not be worthy of inclusion in this report of affairs in São Paulo were it not for our anxiety to use exact and unambiguous terms. However, even if, like you, these darling ladies form a female clan, most of you are very different from them in looks, life style and beliefs. Thus, as we have already told you, they live by night, they do not devote themselves to the affairs of Mars, nor do they destroy their right breast; they pay court only to Mercury; and as for their bosoms, they keep us captivated by them, shaped as they are like huge flaccid grapefruit, which, if they do not contribute to their allure, at least play a part in many strenuous exertions of excellent merit and prodigious exhilaration.

Furthermore, they differ from you anatomically to the point of being monsters, as they carry their brains not in their head but between their thighs, and as is well said in the parlance of the madrigals, their heart on their sleeve.

They speak any number of languages with great fluency; they are widely traveled and well educated; they are all equally obesant at all times; further, there is a splendid diversity among them—some are blonde, some brunette, some plump, some

dicting hopefuls—yet in such a way that despite their numbers and diversity they appear to have originated, jointly and severally, in only one country. Add to this that every one of them is referred to, albeit unjustly, by the same name—"Frenchwoman." Our suspicion is that these dames by no means all come from Poland, but that if the truth be known, they are Spanish, Italian, German, Turkish, Argentinean, Peruvian, in fact from any populated region in one hemisphere or another.

We shall rejoice if you will share our suspicion, Amazon ladies, and invite some of these women to live in your realms and our Empire so that you can learn from them a modern and more rewarding way of life which would do much to augment your Emperor's wealth. By the same token, if you do not wish to let go of your Law of Reclusion, the constant presence among you of some hundreds of these women will greatly facilitate the *modus in rebus* on our return to our Empire of the Virgin Backwoods, which, by the way, is the name we propose should be substituted for the Empire of the Virgin Woods, as being more consistent with the teaching of the classicists.

Nevertheless, to bring discussion of this important matter to a conclusion, we must warn you strenuously of a danger which may be brought about by the introduction of these women if you do not simultaneously admit some high-class and knowledgeable men to the state while we remain in *absentia*. As these women are inclined to be hotly libidinous and reckless they may find themselves unsatisfied in the unforeseen isolation of your chosen way of life, and to avoid losing those secret skills and the knowledge which bring them their sustenance, they may resort to the extremes of using the services of wild animals, of baboons, of tapirs, and even of the wily candiru; further yet, as you will already have considered with fairness and noble feeling in the achievement of your task, it is possible that you, our subjects, may learn from them certain abominations which were popular among the female companions of the graceful poetess Sappho on the throbbing isle of Lesbos—those vices which cannot sustain criticism in the light of human potentialities, much less exposure by the scalpel of strict and hygienic morals.

As you see, we have made good use of our stay in São Paulo, the illustrious home of the armed bands called Bandeirantes; and while we have not overlooked our talisman, certainly we have spared neither effort nor money in learning the main lessons of this imperishable Latin civilization so that we can initiate, when the time arrives for our return to our Virgin Backwoods, a series of improvements that will greatly facilitate the existence of the cultured life in our nation, and make widely known our pride in it, as being among the most cultured in the Universe. So now we shall tell you more about this noble city, as we intend to construct its equal in your realms and our Empire.

São Paulo is built on seven hills, the traditional feature of Rome, City of the Caesars, Capital of Latinity, from which we sprang; their feet are kissed by the slender and restless lymph of the river Tietê. The supply of water is magnificent, and the climate equable to that of Aquisgrana or of Anverres; and the soil matches them in salubrity and abundance, so that it may well be as the historians lay down in fine style that from this earth, this air and this water an urban fauna was spontaneously generated.

The city is most beautiful and it is delightful in its conviviality. It is intersected by roads cleverly made narrow and adorned with the most graceful statuary and finely wrought lampposts, astutely diminishing the available space in such a way as to render these arteries incapable of letting the populace through. Thus, the effect is obtained of great crowds whose estimated number can be increased at will so as to be favorable to the elections which are the invention of the inimitable Mineiros, at which times the aldermen and councilors dispose of great matters which gain them honored days and the admiration of all, accompanied by outbursts of oratorical eloquence in the purest style and with the most sublime embellishments of rhetoric.

The arteries of which we spoke are all littered with fluttering scraps of paper and fruit peelings sailing along, with a foundation of the finest whirling dust where a thousand and one macrobes are dispersed that decimate the population. For this is the way our elders and betters have solved the problem of circu-

lation: these insects devour the wretched life of the rabble and prevent the undue accumulation of unemployed and laborers, thus keeping the total number of people constant. Not content with that dust stirred up by the feet of the pedestrians and by those roaring machine contraptions called automobiles and electric trolley buses (also called "cars" and "trams," barbarisms coming certainly from the English), the diligent City Council charts some enormous anthropoid hippocentaurs, dull-blue in color, collectively called Public Sanitation which, *per amica silencia lunae*, when traffic in the streets has ceased and dust falls harmless to the ground, issue from their dens, and with huge rakes like cylindrical brooms pulled by mules lift the dust from the asphalt and rouse the insects from their sleep, stirring them into activity with prodigious gestures and formidable clatter. These nocturnal activities are discreetly conducted by the light of small lamps situated at huge intervals so as to maintain an almost total darkness, allowing the depredations of crooks and thieves to proceed undisturbed.

For us to copy such customs would, we believe, be truly excessive; they are the only things not compatible with our temperament, which by its nature is orderly and peaceful. However, far from reproaching in any way the administrators of São Paulo, we know that to these valiant Paulistas such malefactors and their arts are quite acceptable. The Paulistas are a tough and bold lot, delighting in the harshness of battle. They live in a state of single or collective combat; all are armed from head to foot; disturbances are thus numerous enough in which it is not uncommon for hundreds of thousands of heroes, called Bandeirantes, to fall on the battlefield.

Because of this, São Paulo is endowed with many burly and pugnacious policemen, who live in expensive, splendid white palaces. These cops strive to balance the excesses of public wealth so as not to devalue the uncountable gold of the Nation; they apply such diligence in this effort that at every opportunity they squander the Nation's money, be it for parades and glittering uniforms, be it for gymnastics such as Eugenia herself might prescribe (though we have not yet had the pleasure of making

her acquaintance), be it finally in hounding those incautious townsfolk leaving the movie or theater, or taking a spin in their automobile by way of the delightful gardens surrounding the capital. These police officers also compete in entertaining the young parlor maids and waitresses of São Paulo, and let it be said to their credit that they apply themselves to this diurnal task with unflagging zeal in the parks, constructed "ad hoc" such as the Pedro II Park and the Garden of Light. When the payroll of these Police becomes too great, the men are sent to remote and less fertile parts of the country where they are devoured by the tribes of anthropophagous giants that infest the geographical extent of our native heath, in the inglorious task of bringing to the ground honest governments; this with the approval and consent of the population in general, which is absolved from blame by the operations of the ballot box and governmental divertissement. These troublemakers capture the policemen, roast them and eat them in the German style; and their bones, falling onto the barren soil, become excellent fertilizers for the coffee groves of the future.

Thus, the well-organized Paulistas thrive and prosper in the most perfect "Order and Progress"; and the occasion is not lacking for them to build magnificent hospitals attracting all the loathsome cripples of South America, from Minas Gerais, from Paraíba, from Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, who before coming to live in these most handsome leproseries, where they are tended by ladies of dubious and decaying beauty—but always ladies!—had enlivened the highways of the state and the streets of its capital in ostentatious equestrian mobs or in those arrogant marathons that are the pride of our sportive race, in whose bodies pulses the blood of heroic Latin cabdrivers and charioteers.

Nevertheless, my fine ladies, in this great country there is still a superabundance of sickness and insects to be eliminated. Everything is marching toward unrestrained calamity and we are being corroded by morbidity and millipedes! In brief, we are again becoming a colony . . . of England or of North America. Therefore, and to the everlasting memory of these Paulistas who

are the only really useful people in the country (which is why they are nicknamed "Locomotives," because of their powerful energy), we assigned to ourselves the task of versifying in a couplet the secrets of so much disaster:

WITH FEWER ANTS AND BETTER HEALTH
BRAZIL WILL LEAD THE WORLD IN WEALTH.

This distich is what we deigned to inscribe in the Distinguished Visitors' Book at the Butantã Institute, whose fame has reached as far as Europe, on the occasion of our visit to that establishment.

The Paulistas live in lofty palaces fifty or a hundred or more stories high which, in the breeding season, are invaded by clouds of mosquitoes with long legs, of diverse species, much to the delight of the people who live there, as these insects bite both men and women on their private parts with such punctilio that neither sex needs any further stimulant, like the massage with stinging nettles employed by dwellers in the forests. The long-legged mosquitoes undertake this task; they work such aphrodisiac miracles that in the wretched shantytowns an uncountable multitude of bawling offspring is born each year; they are called "Little Italians" and are destined to become factory fodder in the manufactories owned by the opulent potentates and to serve as slaves when these Croesuses spend their time in aromatic relaxation.

These and other multimillionaires have built twelve thousand silk factories, all around the city; and in odd corners can be found the most celebrated coffeehouses in the world, decorated with fine examples of the craft of carved jacaranda wood, gilded and inlaid with tortoise shell.

The Palace of the Government is all of gold in the manner of the Queen of the Adriatic; and in a silver carriage upholstered in the finest skins, the President, who keeps many wives, takes the air as dusk falls, beaming benevolently.

If it would not further delay the dispatch of this epistolary communication, Amazon ladies, we could describe many other things to you; nevertheless, it can—it must!—be emphasized to

you that this city is, beyond peradventure, the finest to be found anywhere, by land or sea; we have already spoken highly of the able men who dwell there. But we would not be doing ourselves justice if we cloaked in silence a unique peculiarity of these people. You must now be informed that the richness of their intellectual self-expression is so prodigious that they speak in one language and write in another. Arriving, then, in this congenial clime, we took the trouble to acquaint ourselves thoroughly with the ethnology of the country; and among the many things that generated astonishment and admiration in us, such linguistic originality is not the least. In their conversations the Paulistas use a barbarous and multifarious dialect, uncouth and polluted with colloquialisms, but which does not lack gusto and forcefulness in figures of speech and coital idioms. It is with such as these that we have informed ourselves with assiduity; it will be a delightful task teaching them to you on our return. But although such vulgar and ignoble language is used in conversation, as soon as the natives of these parts pick up a pen, they divest themselves of such crudities and emerge every whit as *Homo latinus* (Linnaeus), expressing themselves in another language, closer to that of Virgil, to speak as a eulogist in a mellow tongue which, full as it is of everlasting grace, could be called—the language of that immortal bard—Camões!

Amid such originality and wealth of glossology you must be grateful that science finds a place, and you would be even more amazed at the different kinds of erudition for almost all of which these two languages suffice; if they do not, they are enriched by the most authentic Italian, very musical and gracious, to be encountered in every corner of the city. With all this, thanks be to the gods, we are satisfactorily *au courant*; we have well spent many hours debating the use of the letter *z* in the word “Brazil” and the problem with the pronoun *se*—“itself.” In addition, we have obtained many bilingual books of the kind known as ponies or cribs, and the *Petit Larousse* dictionary; we are thus able to quote, in the original Latin, many well-known sayings of the philosophers and the Testicles of the Bible.

Last but not least, Amazon ladies, you should be aware that in

this brilliant and progressive civilization there are at the acme of this great city its panjandrums, otherwise known as politicians. This is the appellation properly used to describe a species of superbly polished paladins, so far outside your experience that you would call them prodigies. And prodigies they really are in the incomparable grandeur of their audacity, their wisdom, their honesty and morality; while some may look like human beings, they did in fact spring from the royal loins of the King of Cloud-Cuckoo-Land and have little in common with humanity. They all obey an emperor (called Big Daddy by the vulgar mob), who lives in the oceanic city Rio de Janeiro, which, in the opinion of all foreigners, is the most beautiful in the world, an opinion my own eyes have verified.

In conclusion, Amazon ladies and much beloved subjects, consider how much we have suffered and become inured to weighty burdens since the responsibilities of our position impelled us to leave our Empire of the Virgin Backwoods. Although everything here is full of delight and good fortune, nevertheless we have no peace of mind and cannot rest because we have not yet recovered our lost talisman. We repeat that our relationship with Dr. Venceslau is the best possible, negotiations having already begun and being perfectly on course; you could well send in advance the congratulatory gifts we mentioned above. Your abstemious Emperor would be content with very little. If you cannot send two hundred canoes full of cocoa beans, then send one hundred, or even fifty!

Receive the blessings of your Emperor, and wishes for good health and good fellowship. Heed with respect these ill-drafted lines; and, most important, do not forget about the congratulatory gifts and the Polish whores, both being matters of supreme urgency.

May Ci protect Your Excellencies.

Macunaíma,
Emperor

Paulí-Pódole, the Father of the Crested Curassows



For months after his trouncing, Venceslau Pietro Pietra hovered between life and death, lying in his hammock swathed in cotton batting. Macunaíma was unable to make a move to recover the amulet, which the giant now kept hidden safely in a conch shell under his pillow. Macunaíma thought of putting termites in the giant's slippers so that he would, as they say, drop dead; but since Piaiman's feet were back to front, he never used slippers. Macunaíma was worried stiff about his inability to hit on a way to get out of the stew he was in. He spent all day lying in his hammock chewing coconut kisses and washing them down with long swigs of rum. He decided in the end to go out and seek board and lodging with the Indian called Antônio, a well-known holy man, and his mistress, nicknamed "Mother of God." The Indian was visited by Macunaíma, had a discussion with him and baptized the hero in front of his god, which was still to come down in a shape not wholly a fish and not wholly a tapir. It was in this way that Macunaíma entered the Caraimonhaga religion, which was making a big hit in the upcountry districts of Bahia.

Macunaíma was making good use of the delay by improving his knowledge of the two languages of the country, spoken Brazilian and written Portuguese. He already knew the name of practically everything. On an occasion when it was a flag day—a special day invented by the Brazilians in aid of charity—there were so many huge mosquitoes about that Macunaíma put his studies to one side and went into the city to get some fresh ideas.

Strolling around, he saw all sorts of things. He gawped in every shopwindow, and in one he examined carefully the curiosities found on Mount Ererê, where everything had taken refuge when the Great Flood inundated the world. As he was dawdling up and down, Macunaíma met a judy carrying roses set out on a rushwork trug. This cutie stopped him and put a flower in his lapel, saying, "There! That'll set you back a dime!"

Macunaíma was vexed with himself because he couldn't think of the name of that hole in the lapel of the coat contraption he was wearing—we call it a buttonhole—into which the damsel had threaded the flower. He put on his thinking cap and ransacked his memory; but he had never heard the right name for that hole. He wanted to use the correct name because he could see he might get it confused with the word for one of the many other holes in creation and make the little popsie blush. "Orifice" was the word they wrote, but no one ever used it in speech. Once more racking his brains and not coming up with any way of finding the word he needed, he noticed that from Law Street, where he had first met the girl, he had passed the learned Professor Cosmé's house and had arrived in front of St. Bernard's. So he turned back, paid the girl and said to her in a voice fraught with peevishness, "You've gone and utterly ruined this day for me, miss. Never put a flower in this . . . in this . . . arsehole again!"

As soon as he had said this, Macunaíma felt dreadfully shocked at himself. He had uttered a very nasty dirty word; not at all nice! The poppet, however, had no idea at all that "arsehole" was a dirty word, and as the hero fled back to his digs, abashed by the incident, she remained there laughing, finding the new word droll. "Arseshole," she said to herself, and repeated it in amusement, "arsehole . . . ! arsehole!" She thought it must be quite the thing, and went off, chatting with everyone she met, asking if he would like her to put one of her roses in his arsehole. Some would, others wouldn't; other popsies heard the word and used it, and "arsehole" caught on. Nobody spoke anymore of a flower for the buttonhole; only arsehole, arsehole, was heard.

Macunaíma was down in the dumps for a whole week without

eating, without making love, without sleeping, because he badly wanted to know the country's language, that was all. He thought about asking someone else the name of that hole, but being ashamed of showing his ignorance, he held his tongue. At last came Bragget Sunday, a holiday newly invented by Brazilians so that they could take more time off. It had started with a morning parade at Mooca, followed by an open-air mass outside the Church of the Heart of Jesus at midday. Then at five o'clock there would be a review and confetti battle in the Rangel-Pestana Avenue; and in the evening, after a protest march of Members of Parliament and other unemployed along Fifteenth Street, fireworks would be set off at Ipiranga. To cheer himself up, Macunaíma went out that night to watch the fireworks.

The boarding house wasn't far behind him when he fell in with a blond chick who had very fair hair, a real Daughter of Manioc, dressed all in white with a red straw hat covered with little daisies. She was called "Fräulein" and always had her eye open for a swain. They joined forces and went to Ipiranga Park, a popular beauty spot. There were so many fountain contraptions combined with decorative electric-light contraptions that people were barging into each other in the dark and holding hands to support each other against the buffeting. The blond chick held Macunaíma's hand, and he whispered sweetly, "Ah, Mani! Little Daughter of Manioc!" The darling German poppet was so moved that first she wept, then her mood changed and she asked Macunaíma if he would like her to stick one of her little daisies in his arsehole. This suggestion made the hero all hot and bothered for a start, and he was about to tell her off when it dawned on him what she was up to. Macunaíma gave a great guffaw.

The fact was that "arsehole" had already appeared in those learned reviews that treated, with much display of learning, both spoken and written idioms. There was now a measure of agreement that by the laws of catalepsy, ellipsis, syncope, metonymy, metaphony, metathesis, prothesis, aphaeresis, apocope, haplology and popular etymology, by virtue of all these laws, the word "buttonhole" had become transmuted into the word "arse-

hole" via an intermediate Greek word, "bumphole" (buttonhole—bumphole—arsehole). But although the word "bumphole" had never been found in any medieval documents, the highbrows swore it had existed and had been current in vulgar speech.

Just at this time a member of a large group of mulattoes standing nearby climbed up on a statue and began an enthusiastic harangue, explaining to Macunaíma that it was the Day of the Southern Cross. The sky had cleared with the onset of night and was cloudless, and Capei, the Moon, had not risen. The mulatto went on to point out the various constellations so that the people could make out their familiar friends in the sky: the Fathers of Trees, the Fathers of Birds, the Fathers of Hunting, the Parents, the Brothers, the Mothers, the Fathers, the Aunts, the Sisters-in-Law, the Lasses and Lads, all those stars twinkling away with happiness in a land free from evil, where health was abundant and ants nonexistent, up there in the welkin. Macunaíma listened very gratefully, agreeing with the long speech the orator had made for his benefit. It was only after the man had pointed out and described a good many of the stars and constellations that Macunaíma had to differ with his statement that the Southern Cross was made up of that very group of four stars he knew full well was in fact the Father of the Crested Curassows living up there in the vast open spaces of the sky. This misstatement of the mulatto's angered him, and he shouted, "No, it is not!"

"Gentlemen, what this other person is talking about are those four stars, sparkling as with burning tears, as the sublime poet put it; they form the sacrosanct and traditional Southern Cross—"

"No, it is not!"

"Hush!"

"—the symbol most—"

"No, it is not!"

"Good for you!"

"Get lost!"

"Shut up!"

"—most sub-sublime and marvelous of our beloved country, and that mysterious shining Cross that—"

"No, it is not!"

"—is seen with—"

"Let him get on with it!"

"—its four . . . clear silver spangles—"

"No, it is not!"

"No, it is not!" screamed the others too. In the end, what with the uproar around him, the mulatto fell off his perch, and the crowd, excited by the hero's "No, it is not!", got into one hell of a brawl. Macunaíma, however, was shaking with rage and didn't even notice the fight. He climbed on top of the statue and began to tell the story of the Father of the Crested Curassows. It went like this:

"No, it is not, my dear sirs and madams! Those four stars there are the Father of the Crested Curassows, good people; I swear they are the Father of the Crested Curassows, who is always up there in the vast spaces of the sky. There was a time when the animals were no longer human beings and everything came to pass in the great What's-its-name Forest. At that time there were two brothers-in-law who lived rather a long way from each other. One of them, called Camang-Pabinque, was a sorcerer. One day Camang-Pabinque's brother-in-law, who loved hunting, went out to find himself a mouthful of bushmeat. While he was hunting he noticed Pauí-Pódole and his crony Camauiá, the firefly. Pauí-Pódole was the Father of the Crested Curassows. They had climbed to the topmost branch of a tall partridge-wood tree and were resting there. The sorcerer's brother-in-law turned back to his village and told his wife that he had seen Pauí-Pódole and his crony Camauiá. There had been a time, much earlier on, when the Father of the Crested Curassows and his crony Camauiá had been human beings like us, and had shared the same godfather. The man went on to tell his wife that he would have liked to shoot Pauí-Pódole with his blowgun, but the Father of the Crested Curassow's lofty perch at the top of the partridge-wood tree was out of his range. So he picked up his spear of hard mora wood with its sharp bamboo point and went off to try for some catfish instead.

"Not long thereafter Camang-Pabinque arrived at his brother-

in-law's hut and asked, 'Sister, what was it your husband was telling you about?'

"She told him all about how Pauí-Pódole was roosting in the top of the tall partridge-wood tree with his crony Camauiá, the firefly. The next day, very early in the morning, Camang-Pabinque left his thatched hut and found Pauí-Pódole still in the top of the partridge-wood tree, whistling as was his custom. The sorcerer turned himself into Ilag, the great black warrior ant, and climbed the tree; but Pauí-Pódole saw the great ant and whistled with a powerful blast. The jet of air made the sorcerer tumble down from the tree and fall on the flowery carpet of creeping plants on the forest floor. Then he turned himself into a much smaller, tacuri ant called Opalá and climbed up again; but Pauí-Pódole turned around and saw him. He whistled again, sending a blast of wind that threw Opalá down onto the carpet of creeping plants on the forest floor.

"Camang-Pabinque next turned himself into a tiny fire ant, Mig, climbed up the partridge-wood tree yet again and bit the Father of the Crested Curassows right in the nostril: rolling up his body and bringing his you-know-what up between his nippers, *whup!* he injected his dose of formic acid right there. Phew! Dear people! This Pauí-Pódole launched himself into flight, flapping hither and thither with the pain, and with a mighty sneeze blasted Mig far into the distance. The shock was so great that the sorcerer could not change back out of Mig's body, which is why this plague of tiny fire ants stays with us even today. Good people! Hear this:

"With fewer ants and better health

Brazil will lead the world in wealth!

"I have said it before. The next day Pauí-Pódole decided to go to live in heaven because he could no longer stand the ants of this country of ours; and he did so. He begged his crony the firefly to light the way ahead with his brightly shining green lanterns. The firefly Cunavá, nephew of the other, went in front lighting the way for Camauiá, and asked his brother to go in front to light the way for him. The brother asked his father, his father

asked the mother, the mother asked the whole generation, the chief of police and the housing inspector and many, many others, thus a whole cloud of fireflies came, lighting the way for one another. They went up to heaven and liked it there, and following one after the other never returned from the vast open spaces of the sky. They form that great highway of light, the Milky Way, which you can see across the vast expanse. Pauí-Pódole then flew up to heaven and stayed there too. My friends, that's what those four stars are, not the Southern Cross, not at all! They are the Father of the Crested Curassows! That's what they are, good people, the Father of the Crested Curassows, Pauí-Pódole himself, who keeps his station there in the vast spaces of the sky! That's all!"

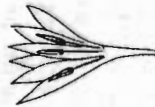
Macunaíma stopped, exhausted. From the crowd a long, blissful murmuring rose which seemed to reinforce the scintillation of those beings, those Fathers of Birds, Fathers of Fishes, Fathers of Trees, Fathers of Insects, all those well-known folk up there in the spacious sky. Great was the satisfaction of that crowd of Paulistas gazing with wonder at those people, at those Fathers of the Living, dwelling shining in the sky. And all those ghosts had at first been men and then mysterious beings who had brought life to all living things, and have now become the little stars in the sky.

The people left the park deeply impressed, with happiness in their hearts, full of enlightenment and full of living stars. No one was bothering anymore about the Day of the Southern Cross or about the fountain contraptions and the floodlight contraptions. They went home thinking of putting a sheepskin under the sheet, as they had all been playing with fire and would certainly wet their beds . . . They all went home to sleep; darkness settled on the world.

Macunaíma alone remained there, motionless on top of the statue. He also felt greatly moved. He lifted his eyes. Southern Cross nothing! It was Pauí-Pódole who could clearly be seen there . . . and Pauí-Pódole was smiling gratefully at him. Suddenly he let out a long whistle like a railway train. It wasn't a

train, it was a whistle that blew out every light in the park. Then the Father of the Crested Curassows slowly flapped a wing and took leave of the hero. Macunaíma started to thank him, but the bird was already disappearing in the dusting of cloud which had started to spread over the vast spaces of the sky.

Ceiuci, the Greedy Old Woman



The hero woke up the next day with a very bad cold. In spite of the heat he had been sleeping in his clothes for fear that Caruviana, the raw early-morning wind, would whisk him off if he slept naked. But he was very pleased with himself over the success of his discourse the previous evening. He waited impatiently during his fortnight's illness, resolving to tell more tales to the people. However, it was early morning when he began to feel better, and he recalled that whoever tells tales by daylight grows a guinea-pig's tail. So he invited his brothers to go hunting with him, and they set off for the country.

When they arrived at a grove called Health Wood, the hero murmured, "This'll do fine!"

He put the brothers in hides, set fire to the scrub and kept himself hidden, waiting for a forest deer to break cover, but there weren't any deer there. As the fire died down he wondered to himself if even wild horses could drag a deer out of that wood. But neither forest deer nor savanna deer emerged, nothing but two singed rats came out. The hero caught the two rats with singed fur and ate them on the spot; without calling his brothers, he returned to his lodgings.

Arriving there, he joined with a number of neighbors, housewives and maids, shopgirls, typists, students, municipal clerks—lots of these—all the people who lived there roundabouts, and he told them how he had been out on the Arouche market ground to hunt and had killed two . . .

" . . . forest deer, no! not forest deer, two savanna deer, which I ate with my brothers. I was bringing home a big haunch for you all, but I slipped at the corner, dropped the bundle and a dog ate it all up!"

Everyone was bewildered by this yarn and didn't believe it. When the brothers came back, the neighbors went to ask them if it was true that Macunaíma had really caught two deer at the Arouche market. The brothers were very annoyed, as they didn't know how to lie. They exclaimed in great irritation, "But what deer are you talking about? There were no deer at all in that hunt. There's a proverb, friends, saying, 'Meowing cats catch few rats!,' but at one time a couple of singed rats came out, which Macunaíma killed and ate."

The neighbors realized that the hero had been telling them a real nancy story; they flew into a rage and all trooped into Macunaíma's room to have it out with him. Macunaíma was playing a little flute he had made from the hollow stem of a papaw. He stopped playing, trimmed the mouthpiece a bit and calmly went on feeling pleased with himself.

"Hey, what are you all doing here in my room? It can be bad for your health, you know!"

They all asked him, "What exactly was it you caught, hero?"

"Two forest deer."

At this, the housewives and their servants, the shopgirls, the students, the civil servants, the whole neighborly mob began laughing at him. Macunaíma simply went on paring the mouthpiece of his flute.

The landlady crossed her arms and started to scold him. "Well, my friend, why do you speak of two deer when nothing but two singed rats came out?"

Macunaíma was brought up short by this, and looking her straight in the eye, said, "I made it all up!"

This frankness put them all in a dither, and they left sheepishly, wearing a hangdog look. Maanape and Jigué eyed each other, envying their brother's wit. Maanape asked, "But why did you lie to them, hero?"

"I wasn't trying to make anything of it . . . I just wanted to tell

them how successful I was, and as I had made it all up, it was all lies!"

He threw aside his little flute, picked up a shak-shak, cleared his throat and sang. That whole afternoon he sang in such a somber mood that tears moistened his eyes at each verse. Finally, when his sobbing prevented him from going on, he lay down his rattle. Outside, the sun was setting in a gloomy sky. Macunaíma felt desperately unhappy as he yearned for Ci, the unforgettable. He called his brothers so that they could spend some time cheering each other up. Maanape and Jigué sat next to him on the bed, all three close together, and they talked at length about the Mother of the Forest.

To dispel the hero's homesickness they cast their thoughts back to the woods and the coverts, the mists, the gods, the treacherous ravines of the Uraricoera River, about the place where they were born and had laughed for the first time in their hanging cradle baskets. They called to mind the lazing in hammocks in the village clearing with the birds singing the livelong day, more than five hundred species of birds . . . Close to fifteen times a thousand kinds of animals roaming the forest, in which there were so many millions of trees that nobody could count them. They talked about the time a white man had come from British Guiana bringing in his Gladstone bag a virulent cold that nearly did in the whole tribe; even now the memory of that sickness made Macunaíma weep for his old home. And that cold had gone to live in the nests of the black ants and the bees. In the shade the heat eased off with the coming of the rainy season and the people sang at work. Their mother reposed there, now a smooth grassy hillock called the Father of the Great Black Ant. Aw! What a fucking life! And the brothers seemed to hear, not far away, the bawling of the river Uraricoera. How good life had been at that place! The hero threw himself back on the bed and sprawled there, weeping.

When his fit of weeping was over, Macunaíma brushed off the mosquitoes and began to feel he could do with some amusement. He remembered he wanted to shock the giant's mother with a brand-new filthy joke from Australia. He turned Jigué into a

telephone-machine contraption, but as his brother was still rattled by the hero's tall story about the deer, he could not make the connection; the telephone contraption seemed dead. So Macunaíma smoked some hash to give himself delicious dreams and went soundly to sleep.

The next day he remembered he wanted to revenge himself on his brothers and decided to pull their legs. He rose early and went to the landlady's room to hide; they made love to pass the time. Afterward he returned to his room, calling excitedly to his brothers, "Hey, brothers! I've found fresh tapir tracks right in front of the Produce Exchange!"

"You don't say, you cheeky jay!"

"On the nose, you lazy crows!"

Nobody had ever killed a tapir in the city. The brothers were astounded and went with Macunaíma to hunt the animal down. They arrived at the Produce Exchange and started looking for the tracks; and when that whole throng of businessmen, of wholesalers, stock jobbers, fat cats, saw the three brothers bent down to the tarmac searching, they started searching too, all that great mob of people. They looked and they looked: Have you seen it? . . . No! neither have they! Then they asked Macunaíma, "Where exactly did you see the tapir tracks? There aren't any here!"

Macunaíma never stopped hunting around, always replying, "Mi roeddyn nhw yma; mae wedi cuddio efo hoel traedi!" and the brothers, the hucksters, the canvassers, peddlers, prostitutes and Hungarians began their search again. When they tired and stopped to ask questions, Macunaíma went on busily nosing around, replying every time, "Mi roeddyn nhw yma; mae wedi cuddio efo hoel traedi!" and everyone went on searching again.

It was evening before they gave up, disheartened. Then Macunaíma excused himself: "Mi roeddyn nhw yma—" They wouldn't let him finish; everyone was asking what those words meant. Macunaíma replied, "I don't really know, it's some old Welsh they spoke at home when I was very little, look you!"

They all took great umbrage at this. Macunaíma stalked off, saying untruthfully, "Keep your shirt on, everybody! I never said

there were any tapir tracks there now, mae wedi cuddio, I said there had been. There aren't any now."

The situation looked ugly; one of the businessmen really got his dander up, and a reporter who was standing near him, seeing this, annoyed him even more:

"Things can't go on like this! It's enough to anger a sheep! How can hard-working people who sweat for their daily bread live when some yokel comes and gets everyone to spend the whole working day hunting for some tapir tracks?"

"Excuse me, sonny, it was not I who asked anyone to look for tapir tracks; it was my brothers, Jigué and Maanape, who went around asking people, not me! They are to blame!"

The crowd, furious by this time, turned on Jigué and Maanape; by then, every manjack of them—and there were a great many there—were spoiling for a fight.

A student climbed up on the hood of a car and started to egg on the crowd against Jigué and Maanape: "Gentlemen! The life of a great urban center such as São Paulo already calls for an intensity of effort such that it cannot allow more than the momentary passage of even the most harmless beings through the magnificent complexity of its undertakings. We all cry out with one voice against the deleterious rottenness that defiles our social organization, to which the government closes its eyes and which debilitates the nation's economy, we ourselves will be the vindicators—"

"Lynch them! Lynch them!" yelled the mob.

"What? Lynch nothing!" exclaimed Macunaíma, taking his brothers' part.

They all turned against him again, boiling with rage. The student went on, "—and when the honest toil of the people is upset by some unknown—"

"Some what? Who is unknown?" bellowed the hero, hurt to the quick by this insult.

"You!"

"I'm not! So there!"

"Yes, you are!"

"Well! Somebody's peacock has been weaned on canary seed, sonny! Your mother was unknown, all right, d'you hear!" and turning to face the crowd, he went on, "What are you all thinking of, hey? I'm not scared, no, not of one of you, not of two, not even of ten thousand or more like you. In two shakes of a lamb's tail I'd tear the lot of you to shreds!"

A prostitute standing in front of the hero turned around and spat at a salesman just behind her. "You keep your filthy wandering hands to yourself, you creep!"

The hero, blind with rage, thought she had spoken to him. "What wandering hands are you talking about? I've not been trying to goose anyone, you meddlesome bitch!"

"Lynch the creep! Bash him!"

"Just you try, you scum!"—and he advanced on the crowd. The lawyer tried to get away, but Macunaíma landed a kick in his slats and waded into the crowd, kicking and butting. At that instant he saw in front of him a tall fair man, very smartly uniformed. It was a policeman. Macunaíma disliked the sight of so much spruceness and dealt him a violent punch in the nose. The cop bellowed, and gabbling something in a foreign tongue, collared Macunaíma by the scruff of his neck. "I'm arresting you!"

Macunaíma froze. "Arresting me for what?"

The policeman replied with something in his own outlandish patter and took a firm grip.

"I'm not doing anything!" muttered the hero in terror.

However, the peeler didn't waste his breath arguing and took Macunaíma down an alley, with the crowd following. Another cop arrived and they exchanged torrents in their simian gabble while hauling him along the lane. One witness to all of this later told of a gent who had been standing in a greengrocer's doorway and at some risk to himself shoved his way through the crowd and made the police stop. This happened in Free Street. The gentleman pleaded with the two policemen, saying they ought not to arrest Macunaíma, who had done nothing. A whole squad of cops showed up, but they didn't understand any Brazilian

either. Women were weeping out of pity for the hero. The cops said a lot more in their barbarous jargon and a voice shouted out, "You can't do that there 'ere!"

Then the crowd started to argue again with great heat; on all sides shouts went up: "Let him go!"; "Don't take him in!"; "You can't do it! You can't do it!"; "Take your hands off him!"

A fine old rumpus followed. A farmer made some insulting remarks about the police. The cops didn't understand a word and began to wave their arms in the air, spouting in their alien blather. The skirmish worsened into a terrible brawl. Macunaíma made good use of the confusion and showed a clean pair of heels by jumping onto a streetcar that came clanging on its tracks. He went to see how the giant was getting along.

Venceslau Pietro Pietra had by now begun to convalesce after the drubbing he had been given at the macumba session. It was hot inside his house as the season had come for steaming corn mush, but outside, the south wind had brought a fresh coolth to the air. It was for this reason that the giant, with the greedy old woman Ceiuci, his wife, their two daughters and the servants had taken their chairs and gone down to sit by the gate into the street to enjoy the crisp breeze. The giant had not yet shed his cotton-wool dressings and was done up like a bundle ready for shipment. They were just sitting there, doing nothing.

A street urchin called Wee-wee Shower was drifting idly through that quarter of town when he met Macunaíma, who was laying on a spell from the corner. He stopped and stared at the hero, who turned around and said, "Ever seen anything like it?"

"Watcha doing around here, dad?"

"Throwing a scare into the giant, Piaiman, and his family."

"You've got a hope! I don't see that giant being scared of the likes of you!" jeered Wee-wee.

Macunaíma faced the pimply brat and felt he was losing his temper. He would have liked to clout him, but he remembered from way back the saying "If your temper shows a sign, hold your tongue and count to nine!" He counted the buttons on his coat three times and calmed down, then answered, "I can and I will and I guarantee that Piaiman goes inside because he's scared

of me. Wanna bet? Hide yourself there close up and do nothing, just listen to what they say."

Wee-wee Shower warned him, "Okay, dad, but watch it, you ought to know what that giant is capable of. Piaiman may be in a very weak state, but a jaguar never changes its spots. If you're not frightened of him, I'll take your bet."

He turned himself into a raindrop and fell close to where Venceslau Pietro Pietra and his wife and daughters and the maids were. Then Macunaíma went into action. He took the first piece of filth from his collection and hurled it right in Piaiman's face. It struck the target, but Venceslau Pietro Pietra was unmoved, he had a hide like an elephant. Macunaíma then slapped an even dirtier word on the old hag. It didn't bother her but was itself bothered that no one took offense. So Macunaíma flung his whole stock pile of filth and smut at them, and there were ten thousand times ten thousand of choice curses.

Venceslau Pietro Pietra remarked very quietly to his old woman, Ceiuci, "There were a few new ones there that haven't made the rounds yet. You'd better save them for our girls!"

Wee-wee Shower returned to the corner. The hero guffawed, "Well, were they scared or weren't they?"

"Not a bit, dad! The giant even ordered some of the new ribaldry to be kept for the daughters to have some fun with. It's of me they are frightened. Wanna bet? Go up close and just listen."

Macunaíma turned himself into a male leaf-cutting ant and worked his way into the cotton in which the giant was swathed. Wee-wee Shower mounted a little cloud, and as it drifted over the family sitting out there in the open, he did a piddle in the air. It started to fall as a fine rain fit to drown a goose. The giant looked at a drop he had caught in his hand and panicked at such penetrating rain. "Away we go, everyone!" he cried; and they all ran inside in a great tizzy.

Shower came down and laughed at Macunaíma: "Did you see that?"

That's how it is; the giant's family is terrified of rain but doesn't turn a hair at the filthiest language.

Macunaíma's vexation at Wee-wee Shower's cheek was by no means reduced by this contest, so he asked his rival, "Tell me something, do you know the Arago lingo, like 'Staraguff aragit aragup?'"

"Never 'eard of it!"

"Very well, Clever Dick, garago sharagit yaragour saragelf!" and with that he split-arsed back to his digs.

Losing his bet had ruffled Macunaíma and he nearly forgot he meant to go fishing. But that was a problem, since he had none of his gear with him; none of his fish-fuddling plants such as timbo or cunanambi or tigue; he had none of the various kinds of fish traps, no snares, nooses, fly-ups, calabans, spring baskets or snatches; he had no fishing arrows, spears, harpoons or turtle tridents; he had no eel buckets, creels, frails, satchels, trugs or panniers; no rods, reels, lines, hooks, no nets of any kind and no paternosters; he had no lures, spinners, dry flies, wet flies or floats; he had no bait, no maggots, no worms, no gentles; in short, he had nothing he needed. He made himself a hook out of beeswax, but a catfish bit and made off with the hook and tackle. Not far away he noticed an Englishman fishing for cartaback with a proper hook. Macunaíma went home again and spoke to Maanape about it: "This is what we must do. We must get hold of that Englishman's hook. I'll turn myself into a cartaback to trick the John Bull. When he catches me and knocks me on the head, I'll say 'Owl' and pretend to be dead. He'll throw me into his creel; you'll ask him for his biggest fish to eat, and that will be me."

That's just what they did. He turned himself into a cartaback, jumped into the lake, the Englishman hooked him and landed him, knocked him on the head. The hero cried "Owl!" but the Englishman pulled the hook out of his gullet. Maanape came up, and disguising his voice, asked the Englishman, "Give us a fish, Mr. English?"

"Right-ho!"—and he gave him a little red-tailed wabray.

"I'm dying of hunger, Mr. English, give us a bigger one, will you? Look, there's a fat 'un, in the basket!"

Macunaíma was pretending to be asleep, with only half an eye

open, but Maanape recognized him; Maanape was a sorcerer. The Englishman gave the cartaback to Maanape, who thanked him and walked away. When he had gone a league and a half, the cartaback turned back again into Macunaíma. They tried the same tactics three times, but the Englishman always took the hook from the hero's gullet. Macunaíma whispered to his brother, "Now, this is what we'll have to do: we must get that hook away from the Englishman. I'll turn myself into a mock caribe and bite the hook off his line."

He turned himself into a ferocious caribe, leaped into the lake, snatched the hook off the line and swam a league and a half downstream till he came to a place called Hog-Plum Clough where there are rocks covered with Phoenician letters cut in and ruddled; there he pulled the hook out of his gullet, well content because now he could fish for queriman, catfish, croaker, hassar and morocot. The two brothers were leaving when they heard the Englishman saying to an Uruguayan, "Whatever shall I do now? I'll never get another hook here like the one that caribe swallowed. I'm off to your country, pal!"

Macunaíma made a great gesture with his arms and cried, "Hang on a tick, white-skinned man!" The Englishman turned around, and just for a lark the hero converted him into the Bank of London contraption.

The next day he told his brothers he was going angling for big fish or pretty women along the banks of the Tietê River. "Don't go, hero," Maanape advised, "in case you meet the greedy old woman Ceiuci, the giant's wife. She'll eat you up, eh!"

"Hell hath no terrors for one who has already been over the Falls!" quoth Macunaíma and set off.

He had only just thrown out his line from a platform on a pollarded tree when along came the greedy old woman, Ceiuci, fishing with a cast net. The ugly old witch saw Macunaíma reflected in the water. She quickly threw her net but caught only his reflection, causing the hero to shiver and quake with fright so that he nearly lost his cool. He tried to make up to her, saying, "Good morning, Granny Bond, is this your private pond?"

The old hag looked up and saw Macunaíma there in the tree,

and thinking he was a nice fat tree duck, sang, "Dilly-dilly, dilly-dilly, come and be killed!"

"Must I be plucked and your fat belly filled?"

"I'll send my hornets in a rage!"—and she sent a swarm of hornets to bring Macunaíma down.

"And I'll kill them all with my onions and sage!" replied Macunaíma, belching out a cloud perfumed with onion, sage and sweet basil, deadly to hornets. This further enraged Ceíci, who screamed, "Come down, my boy, and come down fast, or I'll send black ants to bite your arse!"

And so she did. The great black ants bit Macunaíma, who doubled up with pain and fell into the water. The old hag cast her net, caught Macunaíma in its meshes and carried him home. On arrival there, she put the bundle down in the parlor, the room with the red lamp, and went to tell her daughter, who was a very capable girl, that she had caught a duck for them to pluck and eat, this duck being really Macunaíma, the hero. This girl was always busy with her chores, so the old woman built up the fire to help her. The ugly old witch had two daughters; the younger one was no good at housework and did nothing but moon around, sighing. She noticed her mother making the fire and said to herself, "When Mother comes back from fishing, she usually tells me what she has caught, but today she didn't. I'll go and look." She unrolled the net and out stepped a young man much to her taste. The hero exclaimed, "Hide me!"

Having had nothing to do for some time, the younger daughter was feeling randy, so she took Macunaíma into her room, where they made love like mad.

When the fire was good and hot, the greedy old woman, Ceíci, came with her capable elder daughter to pluck the duck, but the bird had flown, there was nothing there but the empty net. The old hag flew into a terrible tantrum—"This must be my little baby darling's doing, the randy little slut!"—and she banged on the door of the girl's room, screeching, "Mama's sweet little darling, give me back my duck right away, or I'll make you leave this house for ever and a day!"

The threat frightened the girl, so she told Macunaíma to slip a

twenty-milreis note under the door to see if that would pacify the greedy old thing. To be on the safe side, Macunaíma pushed forty milreis under the door; the money at once turned into lots of partridges, lobsters, snook, bottles of perfume, and caviar. The greedy old hag wolfed the lot and wanted more. Macunaíma slid two hundred milreis under the door; the money at once turned into more lobster, rabbits, smoked salmon, champagne, lace, mushrooms and frog's legs. That greedy old woman ate it all and begged for more.

Then the love-sick girl opened a window giving onto the lonely Pacaembu Forest and said, "I'm going to ask you three riddles, and if you can guess the right answers, I'll get you away safely. Tell me: What is it that is long and round, has a hole in the middle, goes in hard and comes out soft, satisfies everyone's taste and is not a dirty word?"

"Oh, come now! That's not polite!"

"Stupid! It's . . . it's . . . macaroni!"

"Uh-uh! So it is! Pretty good, that one!"

"Now then, what about this? Where is the place where a woman has the curliest, frizziest hair?"

"Aha, I know that! It's down there!"

"No, you naughty boy! It's in Africa, d'ye see?"

"Do show me, please!"

"Come, now! Here's the last riddle. Tell me what this means:

"Sweetheart, let us go and do

That which God designed us to:

Join hair with hair, to make a pair,

Keeping the hairless one in there!"

Macunaíma rejoined, "Wow, that's another one I don't know! But between ourselves with nobody listening, miss, I think you are a saucy minx!"

"Well, I'll tell you; have you by any chance gone to sleep with your eyelashes meeting over your eyeballs? Whatever else were you thinking of?"

The hero was speechless. The young woman went on, "Since you couldn't answer even one of my riddles, I really ought to

hand you over to my mother, the greedy old hag; but you'd better make yourself scarce without kicking up a fuss. I shall be thrown out of this place; I shall go straight up to heaven. Outside, at the corner, you'll find two horses. They say the darker, chestnut mare on soft or hard goes like a hare: that's good. And if you hear a bird calling "Beware, beware!" you'll know the old hag's very near. Now without further ado, I'll be thrown out and shall fly up to heaven!"

Macunaíma thanked her and jumped out of the window. There were two horses at the corner, one a dark chestnut, the other a dappled gray. "A dappled gray is God's best way!" muttered Macunaíma. He jumped on its back and broke into a gallop. He traveled and traveled and traveled; he was still going strong somewhere near Manaus when the horse stumbled and threw him. Suddenly Macunaíma caught sight of something glinting at the bottom of a hole. He quickly dug down and found the remains of the god Mars, a Greek sculpture found thereabouts during the monarchy, and according to the newspaper *Comércio de Amazonas* presented one All Fools' Day to Araripe de Alencar the antiquarian. He was gazing at the mighty torso when he heard behind him, "Beware! Beware!"

It was the old hag Ceici arriving. Macunaíma spurred the dappled gray, and farther on, near Mendoza in Argentina, after nearly bumping into a galley slave also in flight, having escaped from French Guiana, he came to a place where some priests were collecting honey. He cried, "Hide me, Fathers, hide me!"

The priests had hardly had time to conceal him in an empty honey jar when the old witch arrived, mounted on a tapir. "Have you seen my grandson passing by, grazing his pony?"

"He has already left."

The old hag alighted from her tapir and took a wall-eyed pinto screw, a useless colt who'd never do, and went on.

When she had disappeared behind Paranaoara Mountain the Fathers lifted the hero out of the honey jar and gave him a honey-colored bay as fair as is the rose in May, and sent him trotting on his way. Macunaíma thanked them and pressed on. Before long he found a wire fence in front of him. Being no mean horseman,

the hero pulled in the reins and brought the horse up sharply, then with a skillful trick he threw the horse, and holding its legs together, made it roll under the wire. Then the hero jumped the fence himself, remounted and galloped on. He galloped and galloped and galloped. Passing through Ceará, he deciphered some petroglyphs at Aratanha; keeping along the treeless ridge in Rio Grande do Norte known as Old Baldy he deciphered another inscription. In Paraíba, leaving Mangape by way of Bacamarte, he passed the Carved Rock, which has so many inscriptions on it that it might be a storybook. He was in too much of a hurry to read them, nor did he read those at Barra do Pati in Piauí, at Pajeú in Pernambuco, or those in Tinamon Gorge. Half the day had already gone when the little words were heard in the air: "Beware! Beware!"

It meant that the old witch Ceici was coming. Macunaíma skedaddled all out into a stand of blue gums. But the little bird came closer, ever closer, and Macunaíma could see he was being overtaken by the old woman. At last he arrived at the lair of a bushmaster as cunning as the devil himself.

"Hide me, bushmaster, hide me!"

The snake had hardly time to hide the hero in the cesspit before the old witch Ceici arrived.

"Have you seen my grandson passing by, grazing his pony?"

"He has already left."

The greedy old hag dismounted from her wall-eyed pinto screw, the useless colt who'd never do, and jumped on a white-nosed thoroughbred but saw not it a shoe had shed. She cantered on all the same, but the white-nosed thoroughbred was lame.

Macunaíma overheard the bushmaster talking to his spouse about making the hero into a mixed grill. He leaped out of the cesspit and threw on the floor a diamond ring someone had given him for his pinky. The diamonds turned into four thousand cartloads of corn and chemical fertilizer and a secondhand Tin Lizzie. While the bushmaster was gloating over this gift, Macunaíma, to rest the bay, mounted a stallion silver-roan that never stopped and was never blown, and galloped on over weald and wold. In a brace of shakes he crossed the sea of sand on the

Parecis tableland, then by long ridges of moorland he entered that thorny bush country called caatinga and alarmed the golden-feathered cock-of-the-rock dancing at Camutengo near Natal.

A league and a half farther on, abandoning the banks of the São Francisco River, miry from the Easter floods, he entered a gorge cutting into high mountains. Picking his way along the rough trail, he nearly died of fright when he heard a woman's voice say "Psst!" and he stopped dead. A tall, homely woman with pigtailed hanging to her ankles came out of a clump of stunted thorny bushes and mumbled to the hero, "Have they gone yet?"

"Have who gone?"

"The Dutch!"

"You must be daft, mistress. What Dutch are you talking about? There aren't any Dutch here!"

She was Maria Pereira, a Portuguese woman who had been hiding in that cleft in the mountains ever since the war with the Dutch in 1654. Macunaíma was not too sure what part of Brazil he was in, so he took the opportunity to ask, "Tell me something, child of the possum and the fox, what's this place called?"

The old girl drew herself up proudly and replied, "This is Maria Pereira's Hole!" Macunaíma let out a great guffaw and beat a hasty retreat, while the woman hid again.

Following the trail, the hero at last came to the very end of Brazil, the lazy Lobcock River. It was there that he saw a jabiru stork fishing.

"Cousin Stork, how about taking me home?"

"Why not!"

With this, the stork transformed itself into a flying-machine contraption. Macunaíma stretched out his legs in the empty crate and they took off. They flew over the tableland of Urucaia, pockmarked with mining adits; and turned to the northeast. Flying over the dunes of Mossoró, Macunaíma looked down and recognized Bartolomeu Lourenço de Gusmão with his cassock tucked up around his waist, struggling to make his way along the sandy path. He yelled down at him, "Come up here along with us, Great One!"

But with a gesture the father called back, "That's enough of that!" disliking this reference to his invention of the flying balloon which had made him a laughingstock.

After hopping over the mountain called the Tumbler in the state of Mato Grosso, and keeping to starboard of the treeless hills of Sant'Ana do Livramento, the stork-airplane and Macunaíma ascended to the Roof of the World, where they killed their thirst at the springs of the Vilcanota, and for the last leg of the journey they flew over Amargosa in Bahia, over the Gurupá and the Gurupi with its enchanted city until at last they landed again at São Paulo, that illustrious dorp on the Tietê creek. In a jiffy they were at the door of the boarding house. Macunaíma thanked the stork profusely. He would have liked to pay for the help he had been given, but he remembered that they needed to economize.

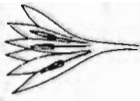
He turned to the jabiru stork and said, "Look, cousin, it's impossible for me to repay you, but I'll make you a present of some advice that's worth its weight in gold. In this world there are three bars that are the ruination of mankind: the sand bar in a river—where the washerwomen are endlessly quarreling; the bar of gold—over which both friends and thieves fall out; and the bar of a skirt that won't come off!"

However, the hero had become so used to throwing his money around that while he was talking he forgot the need for economy and gave a hundred milreis to the stork. He went happily up to his room and told everything to his brothers, who were by now getting worried about his absence. This last caper had cost them a bundle. Macunaíma then turned Jiguê into a telephone contraption and rang up the police to lodge a complaint against Ceici. They eventually deported the greedy old witch, but Piaiman pulled so many strings that it wasn't long before she was back again as the lead in an opera company.

The expelled daughter made for heaven, rushing madly from one god to the next. She was now a comet.

XII

The Peddler, the Sparrow and the Cowbird, and the Injustice of Man



Macunaíma had been delirious all night and woke up the next morning in a fever. He had been dreaming of a ship.

"That means a sea voyage for you," said the landlady. Macunaíma thanked her, and was so pleased with the idea that he turned Jigué into a telephone contraption at once so that he could make some insulting remarks to Venceslau Pietro Pietra's mother. But the ghostly switchboard operator said there was no reply. Macunaíma was puzzled by this and tried to get up to find out what was the matter, but he was covered with prickly heat and went as weak as water. He mumbled to himself, "Aw, what a fucking life!" turned his face to the wall and started swearing.

When the brothers came to ask after him they found he had the measles. Maanape went at once to fetch Bento of Beberibe, a popular faith healer who was renowned for bringing about cures with jug water and the wraith of that bird of ill omen, the manioc cuckoo. For Macunaíma, Bento prescribed a sip of jug water and a cantrip. After only a week the hero was already peeling, so he left his bed and went to inquire what had become of the giant.

There was no one at home at the palace, but a barmaid from a boozier nearby told him that Piaiman had gone to Europe with his whole family to recover from the trouncing he had been given. Macunaíma shook off the torpor remaining from his illness and flew into a passion. He screwed the maid like crazy; by the time he was back in his digs he was crestfallen. Maanape and

Jigué met him at the door, and after one look at him, said, "Whose dog has been hung now, brother?"

Macunaíma told them what he had found out and started yowling. The brothers were very sorry to see the hero so low; they thought an outing to the leper colony at Guapira would cheer him up, but Macunaíma was in a foul mood and the trip was no fun for any of them. It was evening by the time they got back to the digs and by then they were all down in the dumps. They put a huge quantity of snuff in a powder horn resembling a toucan's head, and each took a good sniff. It cleared their heads and they were able to think clearly.

"The trouble is, fellows, you drag your feet so, waiting for hens to piss holy water; now the giant doesn't hang around to see which way the cat jumps, he just gets up and goes. Now you take the strain!"

Jigué slapped his forehead and burst out, "Got it!"

The brothers were dumfounded. Jigué suggested that they too should go to Europe and keep track of the amulet, the precious *muiraquitã*. For money, they still had the equivalent of forty thousand bags of cocoa beans. Macunaíma agreed at once, but Maanape, who was a sorcerer, went on racking his brains. After a while he said, "I have a better idea!"

"Well then, let's have it!"

"Macunaíma should pretend to be a pianist, wangle a grant out of the government and go there on his own."

"But that seems a bit complicated if we're loaded with cash, and besides, you two could help me in Europe."

"You're both full of baloney. How about one of us going on his own, with another following on whatever dough can be wheedled out of the government? Wouldn't that be better?"

Macunaíma remained sunk in thought. Suddenly he struck his brow: "I've got it!"

The brothers were again dumfounded. "What is it?"

"You know, I could say I am a painter, that's much nicer!" So out they went to look for some spectacle contraptions with tortoise-shell frames, a portable phonograph contraption, golf stockings and gloves so that he would look like a painter.

The next day, while waiting for an appointment, Macunaíma killed some time by painting a few pictures. This is how he went about it: carrying a novel by Eça de Queirós, a well-thought-of woman writer of romances, he went out for a stroll in Canareira Park. He was lying face-down on the grass amusing himself by poking a twig into an ants' nest when a huckster passed by. This fellow was bound to be lucky in love or in business, for he owned a woodpecker's feather.

"Good morning, friend," the huckster greeted Macunaíma, "how d'ye do, thanks a lot! Doing a bit of work, eh? That's good!"

"He who doesn't work doesn't eat!"

"You said it. Well, bye bye!"—and he went on. A league and a half farther on, the lucky pedlar came across a ferret, which gave him an idea for an easy way of winning a morsel of bread for himself. He caught the ferret, made it swallow some small silver coins and turned back with the animal under his arm.

Approaching Macunaíma, the hawker started his patter again:

"Good morning, friend, how's it going, thanks a lot, good. If you like, I'll sell you my ferret."

"What on earth would I do with a smelly creature like that?"

asked Macunaíma, holding his nose.

"Sure it stinks. Yes, but it's a very lovely animal. When it does its business, it shits nothing but silver! I could sell it to you very cheap, as a special favor!"

"Stow your gab, you Turk! Where can I see it doing this?"

The huckster squeezed the ferret's guts and it rid itself of the coins. "There you are, see! It does its business only in silver! Helps a fellow get rich quick! It's very cheap, just to you!"

"What do you want for it?"

"Only forty milreis."

"I can't run to that, I only have thirty."

"Well, to keep a customer, I'll let it go for thirty milreis, seeing who you are!"

Macunaíma unbuttoned his trousers and from under his shirt

pulled out his money belt. However, he had only one forty-milreis bill and six chips from the casino at Copacabana. He gave the huckster the bill and was too ashamed to ask for change. He also gave him the chips for good luck and thanked him for his kindness.

The lucky huckster had no sooner vanished behind the trunks and buttresses of the trees on the far side of the park than the ferret wanted to do its business again. The hero held his pocket open, so that all the shit dropped inside. At this point Macunaíma saw the light and started hollering that he'd been had. He rushed back to the boarding house. Rounding a corner, he ran into Joe the Dandy Devil and yelled at him:

"Hey, you dandy devil Joe,

Dig a jigger from your toe,

Drink it down in hot cocoa!"

Joe the Dandy Devil was annoyed at this and made a nasty remark about the hero's mother, who wouldn't sleep with him, but then, with a big belly laugh, he followed the hero home. But he soon found he had come to a very surly household and began cursing again.

The brothers had not yet returned from their visit to the government's hut, so the landlady went to Macunaíma's room to cheer him up, and they made love together. But afterward the hero started sniveling again. When the brothers did come back, everyone was astounded to see they had holes right through their chests. They had not realized that there were already a thousand times a thousand painters clamoring to squeeze a grant out of the government and that Macunaíma would have to wait for donkey's years before it was his turn. They had waited there a long time and had become terribly bored, but their ploy had failed and their hopes were shattered by this cruel blow. When they found their brother in tears, they too were saddened and wanted to know the reason. As they forgot their own grievances they returned to normal, Maanape getting on in years and Jiguê being in his prime.

"Boo-hoo!" the hero began. "I've been bilked, boo-hoo! I bought that welsher's ferret; forty milreis it cost me!"

The brothers tore their hair at this. It would now be impossible for any of them to go to Europe, as they were left with nothing but sunshine and moonshine. They lifted up their voices in a common howl of dismay while the hero rubbed himself all over with crab oil against the mosquitoes and fell into a sound sleep.

It was terribly hot the next day and Macunaíma sweated heavily as he twisted and turned in bed, working himself into a lather over the raw deal they had had from the government. He wanted to go out and have some fun, but he knew that dressing would only make him feel even hotter. He was smoldering with rage, all hot under the collar, and he feared he might be felled by a stroke; then he suddenly burst out, "Oh deary me, oh glory be! When I come over sweaty hot, my folks do nowt but laugh a lot!"

He tore off his trousers to cool himself and jumped up and down, trampling on them. This fit of bad temper calmed the sufferer, and when he felt better he said to his brothers, "Patience is a virtue, brothers. No! I won't go to Europe, after all. I'm an American, and my place is here in America. Without a doubt, European civilization would play havoc with our unspoiled nature."

For a whole week the brothers scoured Brazil, probing all the sandy shoals along the seashore, all the thorny clearings to be found in once-cut forest, the banks of the great waterways, gorges and rapids; searching corpses, thickets and scrub; holms, gullies and mangrove swamps; dew ponds where they found pockets of hoarfrost; foreshores, badlands ravaged by erosion; stony wastes, swallets, ravines, canyons and scree; lochs, flashes, chines, riggs, swales and clints; tors, nabs, scars and cliffs; combs and dingles; standing stones and the ruins of monasteries; under the plinths of ancient crosses; all to see if they could find some pot of buried treasure: they found exactly nothing!

"Patience is a virtue, brothers!" repeated Macunaíma sullenly. "Let's try gambling on the animal lotteries!"

He went to Antônio Prado Square to brood on the injustice of man, and stayed for a while leaning comfortably against a plane tree. Crowds of businessmen and swarms of automobile contraptions were passing close to the hero as he mused over the injustice of man. Macunaíma thought of amending his couplet to say, "With fewer painters and better health, Brazil would lead the world in wealth," when he heard behind him the sound of weeping: "Boo-hoo! Boo-hoo!" He turned around and saw on the grass a little sparrow and a glossy cowbird.

The sparrow was rather small and had a long thin bill and a red collar, while the much taller cowbird was a shiny greenish black all over. The sparrow ran this way and that, followed all the time by the cowbird crying to be fed. This worried the sparrow; it thought the cowbird was its own offspring, which of course it was not. It flew around finding things to eat which always went into the cowbird's beak. The cowbird swallowed everything and resumed its habitual refrain "Boo-hoo! Mama, I'm famished, I'm famished!" in its own baby language. The little sparrow was in a bad way, almost dying of starvation; and that continual twittering complaint "I'm famished, I'm famished!" following it around did nothing toward filling it with maternal love.

The sparrow went on and on like this, flying around, searching for an insect, a grain of corn, any crumb to put in the cowbird's beak. The cowbird swallowed it all and chased the little sparrow again. Macunaíma was still brooding on the injustice of man, and he was overcome by bitterness when he thought of the cowbird's injustice. Since he knew that the first of the songbirds had been people, made just like us, he picked up a stick and put the little sparrow out of its misery.

He walked away. After he had gone a league and a half he felt hot and had a mind to take a drop of rum for refreshment. He took out of his coat pocket the flask of rum he always carried, undid the stopper fastened to its bung hole with a silver chain, and took a swallow. While he was doing this he heard a wailing cry behind him: "Boo-hoo, Papa, I'm famished, I'm famished!" He turned in amazement to see the glossy cowbird. A feeling of

loathing for this bird overcame him; he felt his gorge rise. He opened the pocket into which the ferret had let fall its smelly scats and said, "Help yourself!"

The cowbird hopped up onto the edge of the pocket and ate it all without spotting what it was. It grew fatter and fatter and turned into a great blackbird that flapped away into the forest. It had become the Father of all the Cowbirds, and as it flapped away it cried, "Grin and bear it! Grin and bear it!"

Macunaíma continued his walk. A league and a half farther on he saw a capuchin monkey opening a babassu nut and eating the kernel. This nut has an exceptionally hard shell. The monkey put the nut on a stone between his legs, squeezed it and—*crack!*—the nut broke. Watching this, Macunaíma's mouth began to water.

"Good morning, uncle," he said to the monkey, "how's everything?"

"So-so, nephew, no more than so-so."

"All well at home?"

"No change"—and the monkey went on chewing away. Macunaíma stood there, watching. The monkey did not like being stared at and said angrily, "Do you think you'll know me again? This side's honey and that side's funny!"

"But whatever are you doing down there, uncle?"

The monkey held the nut in his fist and replied, "I'm cracking my knackers and eating my nuts!"

"You can tell that to the horse marines!"

"Now then, nephew, if you won't believe what you're told, why bother to ask?"

The hero thought he might as well take the monkey's word for it and asked, "Does it taste good?"

The monkey smacked his lips. "You bet; just try a bit!"

He cracked another nut out of sight between his legs and gave a piece of the kernel to Macunaíma to try. Macunaíma liked it. "It's scrumptious, uncle. Do you have any more?"

"Now they are finished, but if mine are tasty, what about your own? Eat them, nephew!"

The hero was afraid. "But doesn't it hurt?"

"Hurt? Why, it's lovely!"

The hero picked up a paving sett. The monkey laughed behind his hand and said, "Sure you've got enough nerve, nephew?"

"This should make a lovely monkey, uncle!" exclaimed Macunaíma boastfully. He took a firm grip on the sett and brought it down like a pile driver—*crash!*—smack on his nuts. He dropped dead. The capuchin monkey jeered at him, "Now then, my friend, don't say you've gone and killed yourself. Speak up! Let me hear you! This shows what happens to smart alecks! And now, *sic transit . . .*!" He put on his balata gloves and scampered off.

Not long after, a rain shower cooled the hero's raw flesh and prevented it from going putrid. Soon, swarms of ants appeared on his dead body. A certain John Doe, a lawyer, attracted by the marching columns of ants, found the body. He bent down and took the wallet from the corpse, but there was nothing in it but a calling card, so he decided to take the dead man to his home. He lifted Macunaíma onto his shoulders, but the burden was too heavy for him. The lawyer realized that he couldn't cope with the body as it was, so he found a stick and beat the shit out of it, making it so much lighter that John Doe was able to carry it to the address on the card.

Maanape flung himself on his brother's body and wept copiously. Then he discovered the mangling of the hero's balls. Maanape was a sorcerer; he ran at once to the landlady to borrow a couple of Bahian coconuts, tied them in place of the squashed testicles with lovers' knots and puffed smoke from his pipe over the defunct hero. Macunaíma became able to raise himself, though very feebly, and to drink the guarana they gave him; and after a little while they killed, one by one, the ants that were biting him. The soaking he had had made him shiver badly; the cold rain had given him a bit of a chill. Macunaíma took the rum flask from his pocket and drained it to warm himself, then he begged some cash from Maanape and went out to a betting shop to gamble it on the animal lottery. By later in the evening, he had doubled this money. And in this way they survived making use of the eldest brother's tips. Maanape was a sorcerer.

The Plaguings of Jiguê



Macunaíma woke the next day with swellings all over his body, which he thought must be due to the mashing of his nuts. But it turned out he had "the rose," a rather lengthy illness. The brothers looked after him carefully, every day bringing home remedies their friends and neighbors swore by. The hero spent a week in bed. Every night he dreamt of ships, and when the landlady came in in the morning to see how the hero was, she told him that dreaming of ships was bound to mean a sea voyage. When she went out, she left a copy of the local rag, *Estado de São Paulo*, lying on the bed, and Macunaíma spent the day reading the ads for cures for erysipelas; there were lots of them!

By the weekend the hero's skin had peeled, so he went into town to trail his coat. As he mooched about here he felt more and more tired and done in after his illness, and came to a standstill in Anhangabaú Park. He had stopped below a monument to the great musician Carlos Gomes, who had been a composer of operatic and other music and was now a star in heaven above. The sound of the fountain gurgling in the dusk made the hero think of the waves of the sea. Macunaíma sat down on the edge of the fountain and studied the bronze seahorses from whose eyes streams of water were coursing. There in the darkness of the grotto behind the group of seahorses a light caught his eye, and as he watched it, it became a shapely boat bobbing along on the current.

"Quite a tub!" he muttered. But the vessel grew with each moment. "It must be one of those stern-wheelers—a 'bird cage'!" he said to himself. The bird cage came nearer and nearer, growing larger all the time. The hero leaped up in amazement and shouted into the echoing night, "It's a 'vatican'—a real posh Amazon packet!"

The ship was now plainly visible behind the bronze horses. It had a look of speed about its silvery hull and raked masts hung with colored bunting fluttering in the eddies of the breeze caused by its passage. The hero's shout had fetched motorists from the concourse, puzzled by the hero's signal to stop. Passing drivers risked taking their eyes off the road to look at the hero as he slapped the dark fountain.

"What's up, hero?"

"Look there, look at that posh Amazon steamer plowing her way through the vast waters of the sea!"

"Where is she?"

"She's behind the starboard horse!" They all saw the ship coming from behind the starboard horse. By then she was close inshore, passing between the horse and the coping, right there in the entrance to the grotto. She was a huge ship.

"That's no Amazon packet—that's an ocean liner crossing the Atlantic!" declared a Japanese chauffeur who had made many voyages by sea.

She was indeed an enormous liner. She advanced, illuminated, spotlights shining on the gold and silver festoons and the colored bunting. The rows of cabin ports formed necklaces of light along the hull and the five towering decks; there was music for the singing and dancing throng on board.

The drivers commented, "She must be a Lloyd ship!"

"No, she belongs to the Hamburg Line!"

"Go on, look more closely now, she's a Conte Verde luxury liner you're looking at!" Sure enough, she was a Conte Verde steamship; but in fact the Water-Mamma had contrived this figment to confound the hero.

"Goodbye, goodbye, everyone! I'm off at last to Europe, where things are better! I'm going to hunt down Venceslau

Pietro Pietra, who is the giant, Piaiman, Eater of Men!" bragged the hero.

All the chauffeurs hugged him and pumped his hand to wish him farewell; the ship was right on them and Macunaíma had already jumped up on the rim of the fountain to climb the gangway onto the Conte Verde steamer. Keeping time with the music, the ship's company was beckoning and calling Macunaíma. Composed of brawny seamen, among them strapping Argentines, and some exceptionally beautiful stewardesses whom he could fool around with until the tossing of the waves overcame him with seasickness, with one accord, the crew was welcoming Macunaíma.

"Let down the gangway, Skipper!" hailed the hero.

At this moment the captain raised his gold-laced cap and made a magic sign with it. At once everyone, the seamen, the stalwart Argentines, the gorgeous women Macunaíma was looking forward to screwing, the whole crew leaped up with rude jeers, taunting the hero; while the ship, without losing way, nudged the ground with her bow and shot off back again into the depths of the cave. The crew pretended to be sick with St. Anthony's fire—"the rose"—mocking the hero. As the steamer passed through the narrows between the wall of the grotto and the portside horse, the funnel belched out a huge cloud of smoke composed of mosquitoes, punkies, gnats, midges, sand flies, clegs, hornets, wasps, hardbacks and jiggers. This cloud of insects fell on the motorists and drove them away.

The hero, sitting on the rim of the fountain, suffered from many bites and another bout of "the rose"; he was completely covered with sores and felt both chilly and feverish. At last, with a wave of the hand he brushed off the mosquitoes and returned to his digs.

The next day Jiguê brought a new wench to the house; he made her swallow three lead buckshot so as not to get with child, and the couple slept in the same hammock. Jiguê had fallen arse-over-tip in love. He was feeling very gallant and spent most of the day cleaning his twelve-bore and whetting his dirk. Every morning Jiguê's girl friend, who was called Suzi, went to

the market to buy cassava for the four of them to live on. However, Macunaíma fell for her too, and every day he bought a lobster, put it in the bottom of her basket and covered it over with cassava so that nobody would suspect anything. Suzi was no mean magician herself. When she came home she used to put the basket in the hall and then go to sleep, dreaming. During her dream she would call out to Jiguê, "Jiguê, my darling Jiguê, I'm dreaming that there's a lobster underneath the cassava!"

Jiguê went to look, and so there was! This happened every day until Jiguê, waking up sick with jealousy, smelled a rat. Macunaíma saw the state his brother was in and made up a magic potion to try and cure him of his misgivings. He put it in a calabash, and in the evening he placed it outside on the terrace, quietly reciting this prayer:

*O water of heaven
Come into this gourd,
O Paticl, come into this water,
O Moposêru, come into this water,
O Sivoómu, come into this water,
Omaispopo, come into this water,
O Lords of the Waters, quell this jealousy!
O Aracu, O Mecumecuri, O Father, who come into this water,
Put jealousy to flight if the sufferer drinks this water
In which reside the spells of the Lords of Water!*

He gave it to Jiguê to drink the next day, but it had no effect and the brother continued to be all hot and bothered.

When Suzi had dressed to go to the market she used to whistle a fox trot that was all the rage so that her lover would come too. She went out first, followed by Macunaíma. They went and made love together, but when it was time to return they found that all the cassava had been sold out; there was none left anywhere in the market. To get themselves out of this hole Suzi, who was a magician, disguised herself and went behind the house, where she squatted over her basket and squeezed a quantity of cassava out of her quim. All except Maanape ate it with a good appetite, but he grumbled:

From the Clashing Stones of Whistle Hill,
 From the hooves of a horse that won't stand still,
 From the lass who stands her piss to spill,
 Lord, save us if it be thy will!

and he pushed the food away. Maanape was a sorcerer and wanted nothing to do with that tainted muck. As he was hungry, he soothed his stomach by chewing coca leaves. That night when Jiguê was about to jump into the hammock with his ladylove she began moaning, saying she had swallowed a genip stone which had given her a bellyache; but this was just an excuse to keep clear of making love with Jiguê. This put Jiguê's nose sadly out of joint.

When she was leaving for the market the following morning, Suzi whistled the latest fox trot and Macunaíma kept close behind her. Jiguê was feeling cocky, so he picked up his huge bludgeon and shadowed them. He tracked them to the Garden of Light, where he found them holding hands and giggling with each other. Jiguê waded into both of them with his club and dragged the minx back to the digs, leaving the hero lying dazed on the bank of the lake among the swans.

From then on, Jiguê did the shopping, leaving the girl locked in her room. Suzi, left with nothing to do, spent her time railing against morality until St. Anchieta took pity on her and taught her to catch lice. Suzi had auburn hair in a pageboy cut, which harbored lots and lots of lice. Now that she was no longer dreaming of lobsters under the cassava, nor plotting naughty trysts, she took off her wig when Jiguê went out and arranged it on his great club to make it easier for her to pick the lice out of her hair. But the lice were endless. She was afraid her lover would catch her at this, so she said to him, "Jiguê, my darling Jiguê, when you come back from the market, knock on the door before you come in. Every day, just to make me happy, knock on the door, and I'll go and cook the cassava."

Jiguê said he'd do this. Every day he went to the market and when he came back he knocked at length on her door. The girl then put her wig back on and was ready for him to come in.

"Suzi, my darling Suzi, I knocked several times on the door. Did that make you happy?"

"And how!" she replied, and went to cook the cassava.

This happened every day, but as she had lots and lots of lice and counted them, one by one, as she picked them off, their number kept growing. Jiguê brooded over what she could possibly be doing while he was away at the market, and made up his mind to surprise her. One day he came back walking on his hands with his feet in the air, opened the door and gave Suzi a fright. She screamed, and hurriedly putting her wig on, got it on back to front so that the long back hair hung down over her face. Jiguê swore at her in the filthiest language and whacked her until he was blue in the face. Then he fell to honing his shiv.

The next day Macunaíma was overcome by a desire to make love to Jiguê's doxy. He told his brothers he was going a long way out to hunt; but he didn't go. He bought two bottles of coconut liqueur from Santa Catharina, a dozen sandwiches and a couple of Pernambuco pineapples, and hid himself in his little room. Some time later he came out and said to Jiguê, showing him the package, "Brother Jiguê, when you go out from here, at the end of the streets, there's a tapir's nest up a rhubarb tree. I noticed a power of game round there. Why don't you go and see for yourself?"

Jiguê couldn't swallow this all at once, but Macunaíma went on, "Look, there's labba there, armadillo and agouti. No, I'm telling a lie! No agouti. No one has ever seen agouti there. Labba and armadillo; no agouti!"

Hearing this, Jiguê hatched the idea he might even find a jaguar there and went off at once to pick up his gun, saying, "Well, I'll go; but you, brother, must first of all promise you won't try anything with my ball-and-chain!"

Macunaíma swore by the sacred memory of his mother that he would not so much as look at Suzi. So Jiguê picked up his fowling piece and his lovely sharp-pointed fish gutter and left. He had hardly turned the corner before Macunaíma was helping Suzi to open the parcel and lay the table with a fancy lace tablecloth in the famous beehive pattern which had been stolen from Muriú in Ceará-minim by the damnable Geracina of Mangrove

Point. When everything was ready they jumped into the hammock and made love; after a good giggle Macunaíma said, "Open a bottle so a fellow can have a drink!"

"You bet!" said Suzi, opening the first bottle of coconut liqueur. This had a tempting flavor, so they emptied it. They smacked their lips and hit the sack again, where they made love at leisure. Then they began giggling again.

Jiguê went a full league and a half, right to where the streets ended, all the time looking for the tapir's nest in a rhubarb tree. Could he find it? Wild horses couldn't have found it! There was no such tree, but on his way back, Jiguê was still searching at the end of every street. At last he arrived home and went up to his room, where he found Macunaíma still fooling around with Suzi in his hammock. Jiguê went hopping mad and flogged his girl till she started weeping. Then he seized the hero and cudgelled him unmercifully. He went on whacking him till Manuel, a waiter in the boarding house, came upstairs to see what was going on. Manuel was a laggard from Ilhéus. The hero was completely worn out; Jiguê, who had come back famished, ate the sandwiches and the pineapples and polished off the rest of the coconut liqueur.

The two sinners who had been so severely beaten spent the night feeling very sorry for themselves. The next day Jiguê, full of loathing, picked up his blowgun and went out to have another try at finding the rhubarb tree. He was uncommonly gormless.

Suzi saw him go out, dried her tears and said to her lover, "No use crying over spilt milk!" So Macunaíma pulled himself together too and decided he had better go and chew the fat with Maanape.

When Jiguê returned he asked Suzi, "Where has the hero gone?"

But Suzi was still extremely vexed with him and merely sucked her teeth. Jiguê snatched up his cudgel and gave her another whaling. Then, with great sadness, he said to her, "Get lost! Go to hell for all I care!"

Suzi gave him a happy smile. Without attempting to count them, she picked off all her remaining lice—and there were lots

and lots of them—spread them out on a rocking chair, sat on it and sent the lice shooting all over the place. Then Suzi went up to heaven, turned into a shooting star. She had become a comet.

The hero had no sooner spotted Maanape in the distance than he began to feel sorry for himself again. He took his brother by the arm and spun him a tale of woe, proving that there had been no reason for Jiguê to thrash him so severely. Maanape was disturbed by this yarn and went to speak to Jiguê, but Jiguê had already left his room to look for Maanape. They met in the passage. Maanape told Jiguê what he had been given to understand, and Jiguê told Maanape his side of the story. In this way they arrived at the inevitable conclusion that Macunaíma was a shameless knave, entirely without common decency. They returned to Maanape's room and found the hero wallowing in remorse. To buck him up they took him for a ride in a horseless-carriage contraption.

Muiraquitā, the Amulet



As soon as he opened his window the next morning, Macunaíma saw a green bird. This put the hero in high feather, and he was still feeling uncommonly pleased with himself when Maanape came into his room to tell him that the morning-newspaper contraptions had announced the return of Venceslau Pietro Pietra. On hearing this, Macunaíma made up his mind not to waste any more time racking his brains about the giant, but to go and kill him. He left town and went into the What's-its-name Forest to test his strength. After searching for a league and a half, he found a paddlewood tree with a buttressed trunk the size of a streetcar. "That's the ticket!" he said, and thrusting his arm under one of the buttresses, he gave a tug and the tree fell to the ground without leaving a trace. "Now I know I have the guts!" exclaimed Macunaíma.

Maintaining his good humor, he went back into town, but he was so covered with ticks that he could barely walk. He kept his shirt on and said to them, "Listen, you ticks, be good fellows and go away. I don't owe you a bloody living!"

As if by magic, all the ticks dropped to the ground and made off. These ticks were once people just like us. One of them put up a little stall at the side of the street and did a booming business because he didn't mind selling on tick, he sold everything on tick, plenty of tick was the thing there. But because so many Brazilians don't pay up if they can help it, this hanger-on went broke and posted himself outside his stall, where he grabbed at all the

passers-by, since sticking to them was the only way he could get them to pay their bills.

When Macunaíma reached town, night had already closed in, and he was soon lurking near the giant's house. The evening was misty and the house was in darkness. Macunaíma would have liked to get hold of a sharp little chick to make love with, but a whole crowd of taxi contraptions was parked around the corner and the tarts were already busy in them. The hero thought of setting a trap for one of these little pigeons but he had no beans for bait. He had nothing to do and began to feel sleepy, but he didn't dare fall asleep in case he'd miss Venceslau Pietro Pietra. He said to himself, "Now I'm going to keep a sharp lookout, and if Sleep should come, I'll strangle him!"

He had not waited long when he saw a figure approaching. It was Emeron-Pódole, the Father of Sleep. Macunaíma kept very still there among the termite mounds so as not to scare him off, and to be able to kill him. Emeron-Pódole drew nearer, but just as he came quite close, the hero nodded off, and his chin dropping on his chest made him bite his tongue.

"What a jolt!" he cried in anguish; Sleep fled at once. Macunaíma followed, slowly, balked of his prey. "Just look at that! I almost got him," mused the hero. "I'll wait again, and may monkeys give me a licking if I don't catch the Father of Sleep and put an end to him!"

Not far away was a brook with a fallen tree trunk bridging it; farther on, a lake sparkled in the moonlight, the mist having cleared. The scene was tranquil, and the music of the brook gurgling a lullaby for the poor made it even more agreeable. The Father of Sleep must have been lying low around there. Macunaíma folded his arms, and keeping half an eye open, seemed to be slumbering motionless between the termite nests. He soon heard Emeron-Pódole approaching. The Father of Sleep came right up and suddenly stopped. Macunaíma heard him say, "That fellow can't be dead. Whoever saw a dead man that didn't belch?"

Quick as a wink, the hero belched, "Urrrk!"

"Wherever can you hear a dead man belching, gentlemen?"

mocked the Father of Sleep, and fled at once. Thus it is that the Father of Sleep still exists; and as a punishment, men cannot sleep standing upright.

Macunaíma was leaving the scene, feeling let down by the outcome of his brush with Emeron-Pódole, when he heard a noise and noticed on the far side of the brook a young taxi driver waving his arms and calling.

The hero was startled and shouted angrily, "What do you want, friend? I'm not one of your pickups!"

"That's your tough luck!" replied the youth.

At that moment Macunaíma caught sight of a little servant girl wearing nothing but a yellow linen wrap printed with darker fustic tiptoeing halfway across the tree trunk over the brook. When she was on the other side, the hero called out to the tree trunk, "Could you see anything, tree?"

"I just caught a glim of her quim!"

"Ha-ha-ha! Ha! Very ha!" guffawed Macunaíma and followed the couple.

After making love, they were resting on the shore of the lake, the girl sitting on the gunwale of a canoe stranded on the beach. Still quite naked after a dip, she was eating live shrimps and flirting with the young man. He was lying prone at her feet, his face level with the water, catching shrimps for her to nibble. One after the other, wavelets were running up his back, sliding off his wet bare skin, and falling back into the lake with gurglings of spray. The girl splashed her feet, throwing up a fountain of water, the droplets cunningly stealing the moon's light and dazzling the boy. He ducked his head in the lake and sucked up a mouthful of water. The girl squeezed his cheeks with her toes and received the jet right on the tummy—yes! just there!

The breeze had swept the girl's hair and plastered the strands, one by one, across her face. Seeing this, the boy propped his chin on his companion's knee, pulled his body half out of the water, stretched up his arms and drew the girl's tresses aside so that she could go on eating shrimps unhindered. To thank him, she popped three little shrimps into his mouth; then, laughing, suddenly moved her knee away. The youth's body being no longer

supported, he allowed himself to fall face down into the water, right to the bottom, the girl meanwhile pressing his neck down with her foot. She then started to slide, forgetful of the display she was making of the charms nature had endowed her with. She went on sliding until the canoe turned over, taking her with it, so that the girl made a graceful somersault on top of the boy, who wrapped himself around her in an affectionate embrace as close as that of a strangling fig tree. All the shrimps swam away as the couple started making love again in the water.

Macunaíma edged up to them. He sat on the bottom of the upturned canoe, waiting. When he saw that the couple had finished making love, he called out to the taxi driver:

"For three days past the food's been cruddy,
A week without a shit is bloody,
Adam was made of muck, all muddy;
Give us a butt and be a buddy!"

The driver responded:

"Sorry, old cock, I'm glad we met,
You ask for something you can't get.
If a straw, a match or a cigarette
Falls in the water, it gets wet!"

Macunaíma retorted, "Don't bother, I've some of my own!" He took out a tortoise-shell cigarette case made in Pará by Antônio de Rosário, offered homemade stogies of wina bark to the boy and the girl, lit one match for them and another for himself; then, after brushing off the mosquitoes, he began to tell a tale. The night passed quickly like this, and the listeners did not become vexed by the monotonous whistle with which the tinamous marks every passing hour of darkness.

The story he told went like this:

"In times gone by, my young friends, the motorcar was not the mechanical contraption it is today, but a golden-brown jaguar. His name was Palauá, and he lived in the great What's-its-name Forest. One day Palauá spoke to his eyes and said, 'Go to the seashore, O my pair of green eyes, quickly, quickly, quickly!'

"The pair of eyes went, and the golden-brown jaguar stayed where he was, sightless. But he lifted his muzzle to sniff the breeze, and scented that Aimalá-Pódole, the Father of the Fresh-water Sharks, was swimming there off the beach, so he cried, 'Come back from the seashore, O my pair of green eyes, quickly, quickly, quickly!'

"The eyes came back and Palauá could see again. A very fierce black puma was passing by and said to Palauá, 'What were you doing, cousin?'

"I was sending my eyes to look at the sea.'

"Is that a good idea?'

"It's a dog's trick!'

"Send my eyes too, cousin!'

"I won't send yours, because Aimalá-Pódole is swimming there off shore. He is the Father of the Fresh-water Sharks.'

"Send them or I'll gobble you up, cousin!'

"So Palauá spoke thus: 'Go to the seashore, O yellow eyes of my cousin the puma. Quickly, quickly, quickly!'

"The eyes went, and the black puma stayed there, blind. Aimalá-Pódole was there off the seashore and pounced on the black puma's eyes and swallowed them. Palauá had surmised this would happen, since the scent of the Father of the Fresh-water Sharks was so strong. He moved off, intending to escape, but the black puma, who was most ferocious, sensed his movement and said to the golden-brown jaguar, 'Just a minute, cousin!'

"Sorry, I can't stay. I have to go and hunt up some dinner for my children, cousin. Be seeing you another day!'

"First tell my eyes to come back, cousin, I've had my fill of darkness.'

"Palauá shouted, 'Come back from the seashore, O yellow eyes of my cousin the puma, quickly, quickly, quickly!'

"But the eyes did not come back, and the black puma burst into a fury. 'Now I'm going to gobble you up, cousin!' he roared, and he charged after the golden-brown jaguar. A father and mother of a row broke out in that forest. The songbirds were shriveled up with fright, and the night drew a deep breath and swooned. This is why, when it is daytime above the forest can-

opy, it is still as dark as night on the ground in the midst of the forest; a poor fellow can hardly see to walk.

"When Palauá had run a league and a half he began to tire and looked back. The black puma was close behind. Going on, Palauá came to a hill called Ibiracoaba, and there he came across an enormous anvil that had once belonged to Afonso Sardinha's foundry at the beginning of industrial life in Brazil. Near the anvil were four forgotten wheels. Palauá lashed these wheels to his feet so that he could glide along with far less effort and, as they say, let go forrard and aft and careered away in a headlong rush. What a hellish row there was! The jaguar swallowed up a league and a half in no time, but the puma soon narrowed the lead. They made such a hideous din that the songbirds shriveled up to almost nothing with fright, and the darkness grew so intense that nobody could see to walk. Yet even this hubbub was pierced by the shrill keening of the nighthawk. The nighthawk, my young friends, is the Father of the Night, and he was lamenting the plight of his daughter.

"Palauá was stricken by hunger. The puma didn't feel it, but Palauá could hardly keep going like this with his belly sticking to his backbone. However, he kept going, and sometime later, when he was crossing the sandbar at Boipeba, where the impish moonlight yawari lives, he saw an old motorboat engine lying there, so he swallowed it whole. The engine had no sooner sunk into the jaguar's empty belly than he was able to summon a fresh burst of energy and sped on. He did another league and a half before looking back. There was the puma, almost on top of him. The darkness was deeper than usual because the grief of the night had cast gloom over everything; this caused the jaguar to have a terrible crash into a fence on a small hill, missing death only by the skin of his teeth. Running along, he caught two fireflies and held them in his mouth to light the way. As soon as he had covered another league and a half, he looked around again; the black puma was close behind. He was able to follow because the golden-brown jaguar's scent was very strong, and blindness had given the puma the nose of a retriever. While he was running, Palauá swallowed a pint of castor oil, picked up a

can of that essence called gasoline and poured it into his bladder, whereupon he went *boom-boom-boom!*, just like a mule farting. The row was such that it drowned the ghostly crash of broken plates coming from the Clashing Stones of Whistle Hill.

The black puma had become confused by his blindness and inability to pick out his cousin's scent from the fumes. Palauá ran a good way farther, and looked back. He could no longer see the puma, nor could he run anymore, as steam was blowing out of his nostrils due to overheating. Palauá had arrived at a large banana plantation alongside a tract of swamp near the port of Santos. He went down and poured swamp water into his nostrils until he had cooled off. Then he cut a big leaf from a fig banana, and draping it over his head like a hood, he hid himself and went to sleep. The black puma, who was very ferocious, passed right by him; the jaguar didn't let out a peep and the puma went on, unaware of his cousin.

"The jaguar never quite shook off the fright he had, and always kept close to him all those things that had helped him escape. Ever afterward he went around with wheels on his feet, a motor in his belly, a dose of oil in his gullet, water in his snout, gas up his backside, two fireflies in his mouth, and covered by a banana-leaf hood; all ready to roar off—*bam-bam!*—in an instant. To begin with, he found himself in trouble with the great swarm of taxi ants he had trodden on. They found their way into his sleek pelt and bit his ear—*wow!*—and he howled to high heaven. After that, to disguise himself still further, he took a strange name; he called himself an automobile contraption. Because he had drunk stagnant water from the swamp, Palauá had a seizure making him very ill. Automobiles can have seizures too, my young friends, causing a lot of trouble to the owner.

"They say that later on the golden-brown jaguar produced an enormous number of children. Some being masculine and others feminine explains why people call some cars by girls' names, such as Mercedes or Princess, and others by boys' names, such as Morris, Austin or Bentley.

"And that's the end of this story."

Macunaíma stopped. The young couple wept with emotion.

From across the water a cool breath of air touched their bodies. The boy ducked his head to wash away his tears and caught a shrimp in his teeth. Nipping off its tail, he gave it to the girl to eat. At that moment, an insufferable din broke out as a Fiat-Jaguar opened its throat and howled at the moon—*a-honk-a! a-honk-a!*—and a choking stink filled the air. Venceslau Pietro Pietra had arrived.

The taxi driver stood up first, then the girl. They held out their hands to Macunaíma invitingly. "That's the giant returning from his travels; shall we go and see how he is?"

So they walked up and found Venceslau Pietro Pietra at the outside gate talking to a reporter. The giant smiled at the three—some and said, "Will you walk into my parlor?"

"Sure thing!"

Piainman's ears were pierced for earrings. He lifted up the young taxi driver and threaded one of his legs through the hole in his right ear, the other in his left, and carried the boy on his shoulders. They crossed the park and entered the house. In the middle of the prettiest parterre garden, with wicker furniture made by a German Jew in Manaus, they saw an enormous pit with a swing made of sarsaparilla vine above it. Piainman sat the youth down on the vine and asked him if he'd like to try the swing for a while. The driver said he would. Piainman started swinging him to and fro, then suddenly gave the swing a jerk. Sarsaparilla vine is prickly, and the thorns tore the driver's flesh so that his blood streamed down into the pit.

"Stop! Stop! I've had enough!" yelled the driver.

"Swing, I tell you!" answered the giant.

Blood ran down in rivulets. The greedy old hag who was Piainman's wife was down there at the bottom of the pit, and the blood dripped into a great cauldron of macaroni stew she was cooking for her husband.

The boy on the swing groaned, "If Pa and Ma had been by my side, I wouldn't be having this terrible ride!"

Piainman gave the swing a powerful tug and shook the boy off the vine into the macaroni stew below.

Venceslau Pietro Pietra then went to look for Macunaíma.

The hero was already fooling around with the little nippy. The giant asked him, "Will you walk into my parlor?"

Macunaíma stretched out his arms, murmuring, "Aw! What a fucking life!"

"Let's go! Coming?"

"Of course!"

Piaiman lifted him up as he had the young taxi driver, and carried the hero hanging head down with his feet in the holes in his ears. Upside down like an acrobatic marksman at a circus taking aim at his target, Macunaíma prodded the giant's arsehole with his blowgun. The giant didn't like this. He turned around and saw what the hero was doing. "Don't do that, landsman!" he said, snatching the blowgun and hurling it away.

Macunaíma tore off some branches that came within reach.

"What are you up to now?" grumbled the giant suspiciously.

"Didn't you see the branches were hitting me in the face?"

The giant turned Macunaíma right way up, and the hero tickled the giant's ears with the branches. Piaiman let out great guffaws and skipped with delight. "Don't be silly, landsman!" he simpered.

They arrived in the parlor. At the foot of the steps was a gilded bird cage, but the giant's songbirds were all snakes and lizards. Macunaíma jumped up on the cage, and pretended, with great skill, to eat the snakes. Piaiman invited him to sit on the swing, but Macunaíma kept on with his snake-swallowing act, counting them—"Only five to go . . .!"—and he pretended to eat another. At last all the snakes were finished and the hero, full of the venom he had swallowed, jumped down from the cage, putting his best foot foremost. He was by now seething with rage over the theft of his precious amulet, the *muiraquitã*, and growled, "Hm! Hm! Hm! What a fucking life!"

But Piaiman insisted on the hero taking a turn on the swing.

"I really don't know how to swing. You go first, milord!"

"There's nothing to it, hero! It's as easy as drinking soda pop and sarsaparilla! Ready? I'll swing you!"

"Then I'll accept, but only if you go first, giant!"

Piaiman kept insisting, but every time, Macunaíma proposed

that the giant go first. Finally, Venceslau Pietro Pietra took his seat on the vine just to show Macunaíma how to do it; and Macunaíma started to swing him, giving a stronger shove each time. He sang:

"Swingin' gran'
Captain man,
Sword in belt
Steed in han'."

He gave the rope a twitch. The thorns bit into the giant's flesh, and blood gushed out. The old hag down below didn't know that this blood was her giant's, and stirred it into the macaroni. The sauce thickened.

"Stop! Stop!" screamed Piaiman.

"Swing, man, like you told me to!" retorted Macunaíma, and went on swinging him till the giant was dizzy. Then he gave that sarsaparilla vine a mighty jerk. Eating all those snakes had filled him with venom. Venceslau Pietro Pietra fell into the pit, bellowing a ditty:

"If I escape, it's more than plain
I shan't eat anyone again!"

He saw the smoking cauldron of macaroni there below him and shouted at his wife, "Get away before I swallow you!" but could wild horses drag her away? Not that greedy old hag! The giant plunged into the cauldron of bubbling macaroni, and such a stink of burning leather rose into the air that it killed all the sparrows in São Paulo and stonkered the hero. Piaiman struggled mightily, but he was soon more dead than alive. With a last prodigious effort he thrust himself off the bottom of the pot till his head surfaced. He brushed aside pieces of macaroni sticking to his face, rolled his eyes heavenward, licked his mustache and with his last breath spluttered, "Not enough cheese!"

And that was the end of Venceslau Pietro Pietra, who was the giant, Piaiman, Eater of Men.

When Macunaíma had recovered from the shock he went and hunted out the amulet, his precious *muiraquitã*, and took the

streetcar back to his digs. He wept as he looked at the carved jade cayman, muttering,

"Green stone of Ci, my lovely Ci,
Thou art the color of the sea;
I gaze at thee, but cannot see
My lost and lovely star, my Ci!"

XV

Oibê's Offal



The time had come for the three brothers to return to their beloved birthplace.

They all felt pretty chipper, but the hero was even more cheerful than the others because he had the feeling only a hero can have: the all-embracing glow of total success. They departed. While they were crossing the summit of Jaraguá Mountain, Macunaíma looked back to contemplate the great city of São Paulo. He mused, in a brown study, for a long time, and at last shook his head, murmuring, "With fewer ants and better health, Brazil will lead the world in wealth..."

He dried his tears and brought his trembling lips under control. Then he cast a spell: he waved his arms in the air and turned that one-time Indian village which had become a great city entirely to stone, in the shape of a three-toed sloth. They left.

After much reflection Macunaíma had spent the last of their money in buying, as remembrances of São Paulo's civilization, some of the objects he most admired. He had brought with him a Smith & Wesson revolver, a Patek clock, and a pair of white Leghorn fowls. Macunaíma wore the revolver and the clock as earrings, and carried in his hand a coop containing the cock and the hen. In spite of all his winnings in the animal lotteries he hadn't a brass farthing left, but swinging from a perforation in his lower lip was his precious alligator labret, the greenstone *muiraquitã*.

By virtue of this amulet, everything became easier for them. The current bore their canoe down the river Araguaia, Jigüé paddling while Maanape worked the steering oar. They felt that luck was running in their favor again. While Macunaíma was kneeling in the bow as spare man he made a note of all the bridges he wanted to mend or build to make life a bit easier for the poor people of Goiás. After nightfall, watching the little lights of the drowned gently bobbing up and down in their weary dance as the wash of the canoe disturbed the flooded backwaters, Macunaíma gazed and gazed, then slept well. He woke up the next day feeling ready for anything and stood in the bows of the ballahoo with the handle of the fowl coop on his left arm, plucking the strings of his guitar; and opening wide his mouth, he sang greetings to his homeland:

"Laughing seagull, you know where to look
for fish;
Kingfisher, help me when I cook
my fish;
Swallows, where's my old-time nook
where I fish
On the banks of the Uraricoera?"

Sliding, gliding, down the surface of the river, he kept a sharp lookout, scanning the country for each of the familiar scenes of his childhood. As he swept along, each whiff of fish, each clump of bromeliads, every one of them filled him with zest, and the hero put on a great show of doing crazy things, making up nonsense rhymes and silly ditties:

"Silent swallow, show the way,
Little owl,
Piculet, pick nuts all day,
Little owl,
Brothers, let us go away
To the banks of the Uraricoera,
Little owl!"

The waters of the Araguaia murmured, the straight wake of the ballahoo babbling with a gentle purling music; and from the

distance came the tinkling tune of the water nymphs. Vei, the Sun, beat down on the backs of Maanape and Jigüé, who gleamed with sweat, and on the upright hairy torso of the hero, with a moist heat, setting fire to the ecstasy of the trio. Macunaíma remembered he was Emperor of the Virgin Backlands and sketched a gesture in the air in the direction of the Sun, crying, in the words of Padre Anchieta, "Come, shade your friends from the sun!"

The sky soon became overcast as a rufous cloud rose from the horizon in the calm of the afternoon. This red cloud came nearer. It was the flock of red macaws and parrots, all kinds of these vociferous birds: there were golden-capped and trumpeting parrots, lovebirds, festive parrots, red-breasted and scarlet-capped parrots, macaws, scarlet macaws, fiery-shouldered parakeets, red-bellied macaws, all kinds of parrot, macaw, parrotlet, parakeet, caïque, canuré and canindé: all forming the many-colored baldachin of Macunaíma the Emperor. This great flock of chattering, prating birds formed a tent with their wings and their cries, shielding the hero from the revengeful spite of the Sun. There was pandemonium—what with the splashing of the water, the trilling of the water nymphs, and the screeching of the parrots and macaws—such as had never been heard before, and the canoe well-nigh came to a standstill, stunned. Macunaíma scared the pair of white Leghorns by making a gesture in front of them from time to time and bawling childish rhymes:

"Wouldn't it be funny if a cow had a . . .
Wouldn't it be funny if a cow had a wouldn't it
be funny?
First one to speak eats a cow clap, a cow clap!
Poop-poop! Pong-pong!"

Everyone went dumb, nobody spoke, and in the relaxing quiet of the canoe the silence could be felt. The faint brawling of the Uraricoera could be heard, far, far in the distance. This put fresh heart into the hero. Twanging his guitar fitfully, the hero cleared his throat, spitting the gobs into the river. As each gob sank it turned into an uncouth little matamata turtle. He opened his

mouth wide and sang a nonsense rhyme that has no meaning to anybody:

"Six monkeys dressing wigs
For a dozen learned pigs,
Five whores going to France
To learn a fashionable dance,
Four frogs making a mat,
Three pumas stalking a rat,
Two tapers each in a hat,
With a pretty, playful, tortoise-shell cat,
On the banks of the Uraricoera!"

Then nightfall swallowed up all the noise and the world slept. There was only Capei, the Moon, to be seen, huge and full, bloated like the face of that Polish trollop after a hard night's work, push and pull! What a happy wanton night that had been; what an armful of scrumptious cunt! What an ocean of booze! Macunaíma had feelings of homesickness, thinking of his successes in that great village of São Paulo. Fresh in his memory he could conjure up all that legion of white-skinned women with whom he had made connubial love; what fun it had been! He whispered softly to himself, "O Mani! O Mani! O you pale-faced Daughters of Manioc!"

He smacked his lips so vigorously that the precious labret almost fell into the river again. Macunaíma secured the talisman more firmly in his lip. He thought seriously, very seriously, of the Lady of the Amulet, of that termagant, that she-devil he had enjoyed so vastly when she banged him, *Ci, ah, Ci!* Mother of all the Forest, the wonder woman who had made herself unforgettable by making him sleep in a hammock woven out of her own hair.

"Absence makes the heart grow fonder!" he mused. What devilish witchcraft! And there she was in the vast space of heaven, sublime in her majestic elegance, going around and making love with who knows whom. Pangs of jealousy smote

him. He stretched his arms to the sky, again flustering the pair of Leghorn fowls, and chanted to the Father of Love:

"Rudá! Rudá!
Thou who art in heaven
And sendeth the rains.
Rudá! Contrive that my loved one finds
That any others she lies with
Are as weak as water!
Put such a spell on this witch
That she yearns for her wizard!
Make her remember me tomorrow
When the sun goes down in the west!"

He looked up into the sky. There was no *Ci* there, only Capei, the Moon, rotund, commanding all. The hero lay full-length in the ballahoo, pillowed his head on the fowl coop, and in the midst of the mosquitoes, the midges and the sand flies he fell asleep.

Dawn was already turning the sky yellow when Macunaíma was woken by the screaming of some cowbirds in a bamboo thicket. He took the hint and jumped ashore, saying to Jiguê, "Hang on here for a sec!" He went a league and a half into the bush to seek the beautiful Iriqui, his former sweetheart, who had first been Jiguê's. There she was, waiting, sitting on the roots of a silk-cotton tree, prinking herself up and scratching the spots where the *bêtes rouges* had bitten her. They fondled each other, made love several times and returned together to the canoe.

As it was getting on toward noon the great flock of parrots and macaws spread out to shelter Macunaíma again, and so it went on day after day. One evening the hero felt bored and decided to sleep on dry land for a change. He had just stepped ashore when he was confronted by a monster. It was the creature known as Pondê, the great horned owl of the Solimões, as the Amazon River is known in its upper reaches, which turns into human shape at night and swallows wayfarers. But Macunaíma chose an arrow tipped with the nasty flat head of the holy ant they call Curupê and let it fly without even taking aim, he was so certain it would find its mark. The monster Pondê burst, turning back into an owl.

Much farther on, after crossing a flat plain and climbing up a mountain ridge covered with grikes, he met the monster Mapinguari, the gigantic apeman who roams the forest doing naughty things to little girls. This monster grabbed Macunaíma, but the hero flashed his prick at Mapinguari, saying, "Don't be daft, partner!" The monster laughed and let Macunaíma go.

The hero walked on for a league and a half, looking for a resting place free from ants. He climbed to the top of a tonka-bean tree a hundred and thirty feet high, and at last, after much searching, he made out a tiny light a long way away. He went there and found a melancholy lodge in a warren. It was Oibé's lodge. Macunaíma clapped his hands and a very sweet low voice wailed from within, "Who goes there?"

"A man of peace!"

The door opened and a creature appeared whose size staggered the hero. It was the monster Oibé, the Terrible Giant Worm of the Amazon. The hero's blood froze, but when he remembered his Smith & Wesson he took heart and asked for a night's lodging.

"Enter! This house is your house!"

Macunaíma went in and sat down on a wickerwork hamper and made no move. After a while he asked, "Aren't we going to talk?"

"Let's."

"What about?"

Oibé scratched his whiskers pensively. Suddenly a bright thought struck him: "Let's swap dirty stories!"

"Shit, that beats Banagher!" exclaimed the hero; so they spent a happy hour talking smut.

Oibé was cooking a snack. Although Macunaíma was not in the least hungry, just for fun he put his fowl coop on the floor, and rubbing his belly with his hand, he belched: "Urrrk!"

Oibé growled, "What's up, man?"

"Just hunger, nothing but hunger!"

Oibé brought a wooden bowl, put some yam and beans in it, filled a calabash with cassava gruel and offered them to the hero; but he didn't give him even a morsel of the offal, which smelled

delicious as it grilled on a spit of sassafras wood. Macunaíma bolted down all he had been given without chewing it, and although he wasn't in the least hungry, the smell of the roasting meat was making his mouth water. He rubbed his stomach and belched again: "Urrrk!"

"What now, man?" growled Oibé.

"Just thirst, nothing but thirst!"

Oibé took a bucket and went to fetch some water from the well. While he was outside, Macunaíma lifted the stick of sassafras from the glowing charcoal and swallowed all of the offal without chewing it, then sat quietly waiting. When the Giant Worm brought the bucket, Macunaíma drank half a coconut shell of water. After stretching himself and yawning, he belched again: "Urrrk!"

The monster was surprised at this. "You want something more now, man?"

"Just sleep, nothing but sleep!"

So Oibé took Macunaíma to the spare room, bid him good night and locked the door from the outside. He went off to have his supper. Macunaíma put the fowl coop down in a corner, covering the birds with a cloth, then he examined the room carefully. There was a constant rustling from all sides. He struck a light and discovered that the place was infested with cockroaches. He climbed into his hammock, but not before looking again to make sure the fowls lacked nothing; they were happily eating cockroaches. Macunaíma laughed to himself, belched and went off to sleep. Very soon he was covered in cockroaches nibbling at him.

When Oibé found that his offal had been eaten by Macunaíma he was thrown into an awful snit. He snatched up a little bell, wrapped himself in a white sheet and went to haunt the hero, his guest. Only in fun, of course. He banged on the door and rang his bell: *Ting-a-ling, ting-a-ling!*

"What on earth's up?"

"I'm looking for my pluck—my liver, my lungs, my kidneys! *Ting-a-ling! Ting-a-ling!*"—and he opened the door. When the hero saw this ghost he didn't realize it was Oibé and was nearly

frightened out of his wits. The ghost came toward him: "I'm looking for my pluck—my liver, my lungs, my kidneys! *Ting-a-ling! Ting-a-ling!*"

Then Macunaíma saw it wasn't a ghost at all, but the monster Oibé, the Terrible Giant Worm. His courage returned and he unhooked the decoration from his left ear, the revolver contraption, and fired a shot at the ghost. But Oibé wasn't hit and came on. The hero took fright again. He jumped out of the hammock, grabbed the fowl coop and escaped out the window, scattering cockroaches all over the place. Oibé ran after him. He wanted to eat the hero—only in fun, of course.

Macunaíma fled helter-skelter into the countryside, but as he fled, the Giant Worm pressed close behind. Macunaíma put his forefinger into his gullet and tickled it till he spewed up all the farina he had swallowed, which turned into a great sand dune. While the monster was struggling across this slithery stretch of sand, Macunaíma fled. He went to the right, down Thunder Hill in Rio Grande do Norte, which emits a terrifying noise once every seven years; followed a trail past a clump of trees forming a landmark in an otherwise featureless plain; then made a rough traverse across Sergipe, stopping with bellows to mend in a rocky gorge. In front of him was a great overhanging crag with a cave at its base containing a small altar. In the mouth of this cave a friar was digging away. Macunaíma inquired of the friar, "May one ask by what name you are called?"

The friar fixed his cold gaze on the hero and replied impassively, "I am Mendonça Mar, painter. Disgusted with the injustice of man, I have spent three centuries withdrawn from human contact in the far reaches of the backlands. I discovered this grotto, and built with my own hands this shrine dedicated to the Lord Jesus of the Cavern. I live here, forgiving mankind, changed into Friar Francisco of the Solitude."

"Good egg!" commented Macunaíma and took to his heels in a headlong rush. But this region was full of excavations, and soon afterward Macunaíma saw another unknown personage performing such ridiculous antics that he stopped, astounded. It was Hércules Florence. He had placed a glass across the entrance

to a small burrow and was covering and uncovering it with a huge leaf of the plant called elephant's ear. Macunaíma asked, "Hey, hey, hey! Perhaps you could tell me just what you are up to, mister?"

This unknown personage turned to him with his eyes shining with happiness and replied, "*Gardez cette date: 1927! Je viens d'inventer la photographie!*"

Macunaíma gave a great guffaw: "Baloney, mister, it was invented years ago!"

Hércules Florence fell dumfounded onto an elephant's-ear leaf and started writing, using musical notation, a scientific memorandum about bird song. He was nuts. Macunaíma raced on.

After running a league and a half, he looked back and found that Oibé had caught up with him. The hero put his forefinger in his gullet again and spewed out onto the ground the yams he had swallowed, which turned into a shuffling mass of small turtles. Going around these turtles lost Oibé a good deal of ground, and Macunaíma hurried on. A league and a half farther, he looked over his shoulder to find Oibé sticking to him like glue, so he tickled his throat yet again and threw up just beans and water, which turned into a swamp full of bullfrogs. While Oibé was debating with himself how to cross this swamp, Macunaíma stopped to catch some worms for his fowls, then pressed on once more.

He was well ahead before he stopped for a rest. He was patting himself on the back for covering so much ground, when he discovered he was back at the gate leading to Oibé's lodge. He thought he had better hide in the orchard. As he was standing under a carambola tree, he knew he couldn't do better than hide under it, so he pulled down some of the branches to cover himself. Tears trickled from the broken branches, and he heard the tree, which is otherwise known as the Chinese gooseberry tree, lamenting thus:

"My father has a gardener fair
Who never prunes or cuts my hair
In case the devil comes and digs

My grave just where the ripening figs
Are pecked by birds and eaten there.
Beware, you little birds, beware!"

All the little songbirds trembled in their nests and wept with pity while the hero stiffened with fright. He seized the little leather dilly bag that hung from his neck among the other charms, and cast a spell. The carambola tree turned into the most graceful princess one could dream of. The hero was overwhelmed with a passionate desire to make love with her on the spot; but Oibé had already burst upon them: "I'm looking for my pluck—my liver, my lungs, my kidneys! *Ting-a-ling! Ting-a-ling!*"

Macunaíma gave the princess his hand and they mizzled. In front of them was a fig tree with an enormous buttress. Oibé was right on their heels, giving Macunaíma no time to think up another dodge, so he pulled the princess into a hole in the buttress. The Giant Worm thrust an arm into the hole and grabbed the hero's leg. Macunaíma gave a great guffaw, and putting on a voice packed with blasé savoir-faire, said, "You think you have me by the leg, don't you? Well, you haven't! Actually, it's a root you're holding, you fathead!"

Oibé let go. Macunaíma shouted, "It really was my leg, after all, you nitwit!"

Oibé put his arm into the hole again, but the hero had moved his leg away and the Giant Worm could feel only roots. There was a heron standing by and Oibé asked it, "Comrade Heron, keep an eye on this hero while I go and find a shovel to dig him out. Don't let him get away!"

The heron stood guard, but when Oibé had gone Macunaíma spoke to it: "Now then, you idiot, you're standing guard over a hero, are you? Stay close and keep your eyes peeled!" The heron did so. Macunaíma threw a handful of fire ants into its face, and while it was screeching with blindness he left the hole, with the princess, and they escaped again.

Near St. Antônio in Mato Grosso the sight of a banana plant reminded them that they were nearly dying of hunger. Macunaíma said to the princess, "Now, you pick some bananas and eat

the green ones, they're the tastiest, and throw the yellow ones to me." The hero stuffed himself and thought it very funny when the princess was doubled up with the collywobbles.

Oibé was still following them, so they struck camp and made off. After running another league and a half they arrived at a bluff overlooking the river Araguaia, but the ballahoo was moored well downstream and on the far side, with Maanape, Jigué and the beautiful Iriqui all fast asleep in it. Oibé was nearly breathing down their necks, so Macunaíma tickled his throat for the last time and puked up all of the offal into the river. The offal turned into a floating island of matted weeds and grass. Macunaíma hurriedly put his fowl coop on this mass of vegetation, threw the princess after it, and with one foot against the bank he shoved off, leaving the beach on this floating island of scrawbrog which drew away in the current.

Oibé arrived, but the fugitives were too far ahead. Seeing this, the Terrible Giant Worm, which was really a notorious werewolf, started to quake, grew a tail and turned into a bush dog, and opened its mouth wide in disenchantment, and from inside its guts soared a brilliant-blue butterfly which had been the soul of a man imprisoned inside the wolf by the magic arts of the scoundrel Carrapatu, who used to live in the cave of Iporanga, famous as the home of innumerable bats.

Macunaíma and the princess made love as they floated down the river with the current. When they came abreast of the ballahoo, Macunaíma's shouts woke the brothers, who followed behind. Iriqui instantly became eaten up with jealousy because the hero didn't want to have anything to do with her and only made love to the princess. She threw a tantrum to try and recapture the hero's affections, and Jigué had a lot of trouble with her, even asking Macunaíma to go and make love to her between times, just to console her. Jigué was uncommonly gormless.

But the hero, who had already had more than enough of the beautiful Iriqui, answered, "Iriqui is really very tiresome, brother, she gives me a pain in the neck; but the princess—my word!—that's a different kettle of fish! Don't you believe a word that Iriqui says, ever! The sun may fail in summer, the winter

rain may fail, but a woman's tears fail never her lover to bewail!" And he went off to make love to the princess again.

Iriqui was broken-hearted: summoning six blue-and-yellow macaws she went up to heaven with them. With her sparkling tears she turned into a star, and so did the blue-and-yellow macaws. They are now the Seven Stars.

XVI

The River Uraricoera



The following day Macunaíma woke up with a hacking cough and an unremitting fever. Maanape was worried and set about making a healing mash of avocado buds, imagining the hero had become consumptive. But he had been subject to malaria, and his cough might only have been due to the sore throat everyone has in São Paulo. Macunaíma could not shake off this illness and lay prone in the bows of the canoe for hours on end. When the princess could stand it no more and came to make love to him he sometimes declined, sighing, "Aw! What a fucking life!"

After some days they arrived at the headwaters of a river; they could hear not far away the clamor of the Uraricoera. They were there at last! A lively wren, perched on a silk-cotton tree, saw the party of travelers and cried out at once, "Lady Mistress of the Gate, please for a pass!" Macunaíma thanked him happily.

Standing up, he kept a sharp eye on the landscape they were passing. They saw the Fort of São Joaquin, built by a brother of the great Marquess of Pombal, and Macunaíma said how d'ye do to the corporal and garrison who possessed only tattered breeches and kepis on their heads, keeping themselves alive just to save their cannon from the voracious ants. At last they were on ground they knew intimately. There was the low green mound that had once been their mother, the place now known as the Father of the Great Black Ant; there was that deceptive swamp studded with Victoria regia lilies, hiding electric eels and small turtles; and there in front of the tapirs' favorite drinking place

was the old cassava clearing, now overgrown, and also the family's thatched hut, now decayed and falling down. Macunaíma wept.

They landed and entered the tumble-down old dwelling. The sun would soon be setting, so Maanape and Jiguê decided to go and fish by torchlight, and the princess went to see if she could find something to eat. The hero stayed there, resting. He was sitting there in the gloaming when he felt a hand on his shoulder. He turned his head and saw an old, old bearded man. This old man said, "Who art thou, noble stranger?"

"I'm no stranger, friend. I am Macunaíma, the hero. I have come back again to stay in my own land. Who are you?"

The old man sadly brushed off the mosquitoes and replied, "I am João Ramalho." He put two fingers in his mouth and whistled. His wife and his fifteen children appeared on the steps. They had all become accustomed to the lonely life of the forest, and they went off to search for another place to start a new life where nobody would ever disturb the solitude.

The next day, before dawn, they all went about their tasks. The princess went to the clearing to plant vegetables, Maanape went into the bush to hunt game, and Jiguê went down to the river to fish. Macunaíma made excuses, climbed into a corral and stayed a little while at the mouth of the Rio Negro, looking for his conscience, which he had left behind on Marapatá Island. Could wild horses find it? No, they could not! Then the hero decided to take to himself the conscience of a Latin American, put it inside his head and shaped himself in that mold.

Macunaíma noticed a shoal of sticklebacks in the river, so he scooped some out and went on absentmindedly till he suddenly realized he was near Óbidos, a great place for fresh fish. He felt obliged to throw all the fish away because there is a saying in Óbidos that he who eats stickleback stays there, and he wished to return to the Uraricoera. He turned back, and as it was high noon, he lay down in the shade of a fragrant mimosa tree to pick off his ticks and have a nap. When evening came, all the others had returned to the ruined hut, but not Macunaíma. They went out to look for him. Jiguê crouched with his ear to the ground to

listen for the hero's footsteps, but he heard nothing. Maanape climbed the spike of a cocorite palm to see if he could sight the sparkle from the hero's tinkets, but he could see nothing. Then they went out into the overgrown clearing and the forest, shouting, "Macunaíma! O brother of ours, Macunaíma!" There was no reply.

Jiguê found the fragrant mimosa tree and exclaimed, "Our brother!"

"What's up?"

"So you're asleep already, are you?"

"Asleep nothing, man! I was just decoying a bush turkey. You've made such a din that it's escaped!"

They returned to the tumble-down hut. This kind of thing went on every day. The brothers were filled with misgivings. Macunaíma noticed this and put up a smoke screen: "It's a funny thing: I go hunting every day but never find anything. Jiguê there doesn't catch any fish, he spends all day sleeping!"

This accusation angered Jiguê because fish had become very scarce, and game even more so. He went down to the river to see if he could catch something and came across the one-legged sorcerer, Tzaló. This witch doctor possessed a magic calabash made from half a pumpkin. He dipped the calabash in the river, half filling it with water, which he poured out onto the beach, and an abundance of fish fell out. Jiguê carefully watched what the magician did. Tzaló put down the calabash and started killing the fish with a stick. Jiguê stole this magic calabash belonging to Tzaló, the one-legged sorcerer.

Later on, he repeated what he had seen done, and masses of fish came, fish of all kinds: the batfish came, the wabray and the great low-low, the sheatfish and the colorful lukunanni, all the scalefish and the skinfish came. After hiding the magic calabash amid the roots of a turtle ladder, Jiguê carried all the fish back to the tumble-down hut. Everyone was astounded by the vast catch of fish and they gorged themselves. Macunaíma thought there was something odd about this.

The next morning he pretended to be asleep but kept half an eye on Jiguê. When Jiguê went out to fish, he followed and

discovered everything. As soon as his brother had gone away, Macunaíma placed his fowl coop carefully on the ground, took out the hidden calabash and did what his brother had done. Lots of fish came, the mudfish came, the morocot and the black ghost, the querman, the cartaback and the delicious tiger catfish, all the skinfish and the scalefish came. Macunaíma was in such a hurry to kill all these fish that he dropped the calabash, which bounced on a stone and with a splash dived into the river. A fish called Padzá, swimming past just then, thought that the magic calabash was a pumpkin and swallowed it. It turned into Padzá's swim bladder. Then Macunaíma shouldered his fowl coop and returned to the hut, to tell the others what had happened.

Jiguê was mad with rage. "Sister princess, it is I who do the fishing. Your pal there lies snoring under a fragrant mimosa tree, and then goes and gets us all at sixes and sevens!"

"Liar!" Macunaíma retorted.

"Then what have you done today?"

"Hunted a deer."

"Well, where is it?"

"I ate it, see! I was going along a trail and saw the spoor of a . . . of a . . . of a savanna deer . . . no, it wasn't, it was a forest deer. I crouched down to follow the tracks. I was looking, looking closely, you know, and all of a sudden I bumped my head into something soft, what a joke! Guess what it was? It was the deer's fanny!" Macunaíma gave a great guffaw. "The deer said, 'What are you doing here, dad?' 'Looking for you!' I replied. I killed that savanna deer and ate it, innards and all. I was carrying a haunch back for you, but while I was running across a quagmire I stumbled. The haunch got thrown to the side and a queen leaf-cutting ant dropped a load of shit on it."

This yarn was so long that Maanape couldn't swallow it. Maanape was a sorcerer. He put his face close to his brother's and asked, "You went to hunt?"

"What do you mean? Yes, I did."

"And what did you hunt?"

"A deer."

"What?"—and Maanape made a menacing gesture.

Macunaíma blinked with fright and confessed that he had been telling a lot of twaddle.

The next day, when Jiguê was on his way to get the magic calabash, he met a giant armadillo, really a sorcerer called Caicãe who never had a mother. Caicãe, sitting at the mouth of the earth, was plucking the strings of a little fiddle made from the other half of the magic pumpkin; and as he strummed he sang:

"Shame on you! Shame on you! Porcupine!
Shame on you! Shame on you! Coatimundi!
Shame on you! Shame on you! Peccary!
Shame on you! Shame on you! Labba!
Shame on you! Shame on you! Jaguar! . . . Eh!"

and he went on in the same vein. Many animals came up. Jiguê watched and took it all in. Caicãe put down his little magic fiddle and picked up a club to kill as many as he could of these animals he had bewitched. Jiguê stole the little fiddle belonging to Caicãe, the sorcerer who never had a mother.

Later on, Jiguê sang the song he had heard, and such a flood of animals as appeared in front of him had never been seen or heard of before. Jiguê returned to their rundown hut carrying some of them, after hiding the little fiddle under the roots of a monkey ladder. They were all astounded and gorged themselves. But Macunaíma was suspicious.

The next day he kept half an eye open to watch Jiguê go out, then followed him. He discovered everything. When his brother had gone home to the hut Macunaíma took out the little fiddle from its hiding place and repeated all he had heard. A horde of wild animals appeared: deer, agouti, anteaters, capybaras, armadillos, tortoises, labbas, crab-dogs, otters, turtles, collared peccaries, iguanas, monkeys, white-lipped peccaries, tapirs, jaguars, ocelots, stags, margays, pumas, voles—a veritable flood of game. This zoo terrified the hero, who fled in a great hurry, flinging the little violin as far away as he could. The fowl coop on his arm kept knocking against trees, causing the cock and hen to cackle deafeningly. Macunaíma thought it was the animals chasing after him, and put on even more speed.

The little magic fiddle landed on the tusk of a peccary having a kind of navel on its back, and broke into ten times ten pieces, which were swallowed by the animals, who thought it was a pumpkin. The pieces turned into bladders inside them.

The hero burst into the old shack, turning himself inside out with the effort. As soon as he could catch his breath he told his tale.

Jigué's blood boiled with anger and he exclaimed, "Now we can catch neither fish nor game!" and went off to sleep in high dudgeon. They all began to suffer the pangs of hunger, but as soon as food was mentioned Jigué jumped back into his hammock and closed his eyes. The hero swore he'd get back at him. He made a mock fishhook from an anaconda's fang and recited a spell over it, "O you fishhook of a snake in the grass, if brother Jigué comes to try you out, run yourself into his hand!"

Jigué couldn't sleep for hunger, and seeing the new fishhook, he asked his brother, "Is that hook any good?"

"First-rate!" said Macunaíma and went on cleaning his fowl coop.

Since Jigué was so hungry, he decided to go fishing, and said, "Let me see if that hook's any good." He picked up the hook and tried its magic point on the palm of his hand. The anaconda's tooth pierced the skin and injected venom into the hand. Jigué ran to the clearing, and though he found some cassava tubers to chew and swallow, it was to no avail. So he rushed off to look for the skull of a horned screamer. He applied snake venom to the projecting horn and stabbed it into his hand. But that was no use as an antidote either. The poison turned the wound into a leprous ulcer, and the yaws spread all over his body. First, it ate away one of Jigué's arms, then half his body, then his legs, then the other half of his body and the remaining arm. Lastly, it ate away his neck and head; nothing but Jigué's ghostly shadow was left.

The princess shuddered with disgust and loathing. Of late, she had been making love with Jigué. Macunaíma had noticed this, but had shrugged his shoulders and said to himself,

"I planted cassava, cassava grew;
From a thief in the house,
No one is secure!
Patience!"

The infuriated princess said to Jigué's ghostly shadow, "When hunger drives Macunaíma out for a walk, turn yourself into a cashew tree, a banana plant, a roasting deer smoking on a spit!" She said this because she wanted the ghostly shadow, infected with leprosy, to kill Macunaíma.

The hero was so famished the next day that to ease his hunger, he went for a walk. He came across a cashew tree laden with ripe red and yellow fruit. Although hungry, he sensed it was the leprous shadow and walked on. A league and a half farther on he found a deer grilling on a spit. By this time he was ravenous, but he guessed the roasting deer was really the leprous shadow. After another league and a half he saw a banana plant bearing hands of ripe fruit. Hunger was now making the hero's eyes roll deliriously in his head, giving him such eye-turn that he saw his brother's ghostly shadow on one side and the ripe bananas on the other.

"Aha! Now at last I can eat!" he said, and tucked in.

He ate all the leprous bananas, and as they were in fact the poisonous shadow which was all that remained of Jigué, Macunaíma was doomed to die. Then it occurred to him to pass on the sickness so that he would not die alone. He caught a leaf-cutting ant, rubbed it in the ulcer on his nose, and the ant, which had been a human once like us, became a leper. Then he caught a different kind of ant and did the same with it; it became a leper too. He caught four more ants, all of different kinds, and did the same with each. There were no more within the hero's reach. He was too exhausted to stretch out his arms; he was on his last legs. He waited for that last rally which comes before death, summoned up what strength remained in him, seized a straw mosquito that was biting his knee and passed his disease on to it. It is for this reason that when the straw mosquito bites people nowadays, it enters the skin and crosses through the body and

out the other side, leaving perforations that become the ghastly abscesses known as Bauru's ulcers.

As Macunaíma had now passed on his disease to seven others and had thus become cured of his suffering, he returned to the tumble-down hut. Jigué's ghostly shadow had to acknowledge that Macunaíma was amazingly astute, and now wanted to return to join his family in despair. It was dusk by now, and confused by the dark, the ghostly shadow could no longer find the nearby trail. It sat on a boulder and shouted, "A little light, Princess!"

The princess, limping badly because she was ill with the staggers, came out with a torch to light the way. The shadow swallowed up both the light and the princess. It shouted again, "A little light, brother Maanape!"

Maanape came out at once with another torch to light the way. He could move only slowly because the barber bug had sucked his blood, and Maanape had become infected with Chagas' disease, for which no cure is known. The shadow swallowed the torch and Maanape as well, and shouted again, "Let's have some light, brother Macunaíma!"

It wanted to swallow the hero, too, but Macunaíma, having seen what had happened to his former ladylove and to his brother, closed the door and stayed very quietly inside the run-down hut. The ghostly shadow kept on for a time begging for a light, but obtaining no answer, continued to moan and wail sadly until, in the hours before dawn, Capei, the Moon, lit up the world and the leprous ghost was able to find its way to the broken-down hut. It sat on a cedar log by the threshold and waited for day so that it could vanquish its brother.

At daybreak it was still squatting there. Macunaíma woke up and could hear nothing. He said to himself, "Crickey! It's cleared off!" and walked out. As he went through the door, the ghostly shadow leaped on his back. The hero suspected nothing. He was sick with hunger, but the shadow wouldn't let him eat anything. Everything Macunaíma picked, the shadow swallowed. He picked palm cabbage, monkey pot, yam and taro roots, water cocoa-nut seeds, cashew pears, custard apples, hog plums,

Surinam cherries, Chinese gooseberries, breadfruit, sweetsop, soursop, star apple, palm sago and waikie, every edible shoot, root or fruit that grows in the bush, but the ghost swallowed them first.

Then Macunaíma decided to fish; he had to do it himself, as there was no one else to do it for him. But every time he took a fish off the hook and threw it into his quake, the shadow jumped down off his back and swallowed it, then returned again to its perch. Macunaíma pondered: "All right! Have it your own way!"

When he hauled in the next fish, the hero, with a heroic spurt of energy, gave the rod a prodigious flick that threw the fish right over the border into Guyana. The shadow ran after it and Macunaíma raced into the forest in the opposite direction. When the shadow came back, finding his brother gone, it followed his trail. After running for a while across the country of the White Armadillo Indians and getting a big fright when, without asking leave, Macunaíma ran between the ghost of Old George and the ghost of Zumbi, who were having an argument, he became very, very tired, looked back and saw the shadow gaining on him. He was in Paraíba at this time, and he so lacked the will to go on that he stopped in his tracks. This was because the hero had an attack of malaria. Close-by, some workmen were clearing termite mounds in order to construct a dam. Macunaíma asked them for some water; they didn't have a drop but gave him a root of the water-bearing mombin to quench his thirst. The hero thanked them and satisfied the thirst of his Leghorn fowls, then yelled, "The devil take people who work!" The men set their dogs on the hero, which was just what he needed to scare him into going on.

In front, a cattle drove opened up. Macunaíma saw he was being followed by the shadow, but he didn't let it worry him: he kept to the stock-route. Just ahead, lying down asleep, was a fine Malabar bull called Espácio, from Piauí. The hero gave him a vigorous whack on the rump, and the frightened bull lumbered off in a crazy gallop, with the rest of the herd following blindly. Macunaíma broke away down a handy little turning and hid

himself under the leaves of a giant arum lily. The ghostly shadow heard the thundering hooves of the galloping bull, and thinking it was Macunaíma, made after it. It caught up with the bull, and so as not to miss the chance of a lift, perched on its back and sang cheerfully:

"My lovely bull,
Bull living so happily,
Say your farewell
To all your family.

"Ooh—ah—bump!
Frolic, my bull!
Ooh—ah—bump,
Frolic, my bull!"

But every time the bull tried to graze, the shadow ate everything first. The bull became moody, became dejected, skinny and slow. While passing the secluded grove of trees near Guararapes called Água Doce, the bull was terrified to see in the middle of a sandy waste a beautiful mirage, a shady clump of orange trees with a flock of hens scratching beneath. This vision was a portent of death. The shadow, now disenchanted, sang:

"My lovely bull
Now death is near
Say your farewell
For another year.

"Ooh—ah—bump!
Frolic, my bull!
Ooh—ah—bump,
Frolic, my bull!"

The next day the bull died and turned green with decay. The ghostly shadow was very sorrowful and consoled itself by singing:

"Oh, oh, oh, my bull has died,
What will become of me then?
I'll look for my other
Little brother
Down in the Good Garden."

Good Garden was a ranch down in Rio Grande do Sul. Then along came a giantess who had enjoyed consorting with the bull. She saw the bull was dead, wept copiously and wanted to take the dead bull's carcass home with her. This greatly annoyed the ghostly shadow, which sang:

"Put it down, giantess,
Taking away's so dangerous!
Put your bovine lover down,
Make a gesture purely generous!"

The giantess thanked the shadow and danced away. Then a guy called Manuel de Lapa came by, carrying cashew leaves and sprigs of cotton. The shadow greeted this renowned peglegged buffoon:

"Gaffer Mané comes from Assu,
Gaffer Mané comes from Assu,
He comes carrying leaves of cashew!

"Gaffer Mané comes from sticks forgotten,
Gaffer Mané comes from sticks forgotten,
He comes bearing sprigs of cotton!"

Manuel felt himself flattered by this greeting and responded by tripping a clog dance and covering the bull's carcass with cashew leaves and cotton sprigs. Darkness was gathering as the Old One drew night's curtain from its hiding place, and the ghostly shadow was completely confused by being unable to distinguish the bull underneath the flocks of cotton and the cashew foliage. It started dancing around looking for the bull's carcass. A firefly had been admiring the dance, and sang, asking:

"Beautiful little shepherdess,
Whatever are you doing here?"

The shadow replied, singing:

"I am searching for my steer
Which I've lost somewhere round here,
Little sister!"

The dancing firefly spiraled down from a branch and showed the ghost where the bull lay. The ghost climbed onto the green belly of the bull and remained there, weeping.

The next day the bull was putrid. All the vultures came, the black vultures, the turkey buzzards, the carrion crows, the yellow-headed vultures, and the king vultures that eat only the eyes and tongue, all these baldpates came and started prancing for joy. The largest one set up a dance, singing:

"A vulture is coming as ugly as sin
A vulture is leaving, all's clean as a pin!"

He was the red-necked vulture, the king vulture, the Father of All the Vultures. He told a small vulture to go inside the bull's carcass to make sure it really was ripe. The little vulture went in at one door and came out the other, saying yes, it was! So they all had a feast, dancing and singing:

"My lovely bull
With a zebu's hide!
We crows are circling
The bull that's died.

"Ooh—ah—bump,
Frolic, my bull!
Ooh—ah—bump,
Frolic, my bull!"

Thus was invented that most celebrated entertainment known as "Bumba—meu—Boi" or "Bang—my—Bull."

The ghostly shadow was annoyed that they were eating his bull and hopped onto the king vulture's shoulder. The Father of All the Vultures was delighted at this and screamed, "I've found a mate for my head, man!" and he flew off into the sky. To this day the king vulture, who is the Father of All the Vultures, has two heads. The leprous shadow of Jigüé is on the left. To begin with, the king vulture had only one head.

XVII

The Great Bear



Macunaima dragged himself lethargically back to the tumble-down hut, now unoccupied by anyone. His spirits were at a low ebb because he could not fathom the silence. He lay like a dead man, dry-eyed, as if he had given way entirely to despair. His brothers were gone, transformed into the left head of the king vulture and no longer the companions of the times when they had all fooled around with the local girls. The silence had begun to mantle the riverbank of the Uraricoera with languor. How he loathed it all! Aw! What a fucking life!

Macunaima was compelled to abandon the tumble-down hut as the last wall of plaited palm fronds was falling in. Because of the lassitude following his last bout with fever he didn't have the vim or vigor to build even a flimsy shelter. He carried his hammock to the top of a mound out of reach of the swollen river, where there was an engraved rock sheltering buried treasure, and he slung it between two leafy cashew trees. He did not leave it for many days, just sleeping and shaking down cashews to eat. What a forsaken existence! His many-hued flock of followers had melted away. He had not noticed the rummy-parrot flying overhead, but his parrot screen had asked their kinsman where he was off to.

"The corn is ripening in the land of the English. I am going over there!"

So all the parrots flew off to eat corn in Guyana, but first changed themselves into parakeets because, as they say, the

parrots eat the corn, but the parakeets take the blame. The only one that stayed behind was a parrot that was a notable talker. Macunaíma consoled himself, pensively remarking, "Whatever has been earned by wickedness, the devil will surely take away! Patience!"

He spent all his days plunged deeply in remorse, distracting himself by making the bird repeat, in the tribal tongue, all the things that had happened to the hero since childhood. Aaaah! Macunaíma yawned, dribbling cashew juice, lolling in his hammock with his hands pillowing his head; the pair of Leghorn fowls perched at his feet, the talking parrot on his belly. Night came. Perfumed by the scent of the cashews, the hero fell asleep. When dawn broke, the parrot took its beak from under its wing and breakfasted off the spiders that had spun their webs from the branches to the hero's body during the night. Then it said, "Macunaíma!"

The sleeper did not respond.

"Macunaíma, O Macunaíma!"

"Let a fellow sleep, parrot!"

"Wake up, hero! The sun has risen!"

"Aw! What a fucking life!"

With fewer ants and better health

Brazil will be a place of wealth!"

Macunaíma gave a great guffaw and scratched his head, which was crawling with chicken lice. Then the bird repeated what it had learned the previous evening, and Macunaíma gloated over his former glories. This encouraged him to tell the parrot another extravagant tale of his deeds. Thus they went on day after day.

Once when Papaceia, the Evening Star, appeared, the hero went to sleep while talking of these things, and the parrot was annoyed by the story stopping halfway. It made an insulting gesture at the star Papaceia.

Macunaíma said, "You musn't insult that star, parrot! Tain-kang is a good sort. Tain-kang, who is the star Papaceia, was sorry for this earth of ours, and sent Emeron-Pódole to bring the peace of sleep to this world, to all those beings who can be peaceful because they are not tormented by thought as we are.

Tain-kang is also a person . . . He was shining so beautifully up there in the vast expanse of heaven that the eldest daughter of Zozoiça, the chieftain of the Carajá tribe, a maiden called Imaerô, said, 'Father, Tain-kang shines so beautifully I would like to be his wife.' Zozoiça laughed, because he thought it was out of the question for Tain-kang to marry his eldest daughter. However, this is what happened: One evening, just as dusk was falling, a silver corial slid down the river. The paddler jumped out, knocked on the stone bench outside the house and said to Imaerô, 'I am Tain-kang. I heard your prayer and hastened to you in my silver corial. Please come and live with me and be my wife.' 'Yes!' she cried, overcome with delight. She gave her hammock to her betrothed and went to sleep with her youngest sister, Denaquê.

"The next morning, when Tain-kang jumped down from his hammock, everyone was astounded to see that he was an old shriveled dotard, trembling like the light from Papaceia, the Evening Star. Imaerô said, 'Be off with you, you dotard! As if I'd marry an old man like you! For me, there must be a young man of the Carajá tribe, strong and valiant!'

"This made Tain-kang feel very down in the mouth, and he started brooding on the injustice of mankind. But the youngest daughter of the chieftain Zozoiça felt sorry for the poor old wrinkled man and exclaimed, 'I'll come and live with you!'

"Tain-kang shone with joy. They suited each other. Denaquê, making ready her bridal outfit, sang night and day: 'Hooray for tomorrow, hooray for those hours of bouncing in bed!'

"Zozoiça replied, 'And I'll be bouncing in bed too, with your mother!'

"After they had had enough of the fondling and caressing that all newlyweds crave, my dear parrot, the hammock woven by Denaquê shook in time to the dance of love.

"Day had hardly broken over the horizon when Tain-kang jumped down from his hammock and said to his beloved, 'I'm going to fell some trees to make a clearing for a garden. You stay in the hut, and don't even think of going to the clearing to watch me!'

"She agreed, and lay in her hammock thinking of the quaint little old man who had given her the most delightful night of love anyone could imagine.

"Tain-kang felled the trees and burned them all, along with the termite mounds, and prepared the ground. At that time the Carajá tribe had no knowledge of cultivating useful plants; they ate only fish and game. Early the next day Tain-kang told his loved one that he was going to look for seeds to sow, and repeated his prohibition. Denaqué remained lying in her hammock for a while, thinking of the strenuous pleasures of that night of love with the old man. Then she went to work at her loom.

"Tain-kang paid a brief visit to heaven, where he went to a brook called Berô, said a prayer kneeling astride the stream with one leg on each bank, and waited like this, paying close attention to the water. After a little while some seeds came floating down, seeds of such useful plants as sweet corn, tobacco and cassava. Tain-kang gathered everything that drifted down, returned from heaven and went to plant the seeds in his garden. He was toiling away in the sun when Denaqué appeared. A longing had come over her to see the lover who had given her such blissful nights of love. Denaqué cried out with joy: Tain-kang was no longer a decrepit old man, he was a strong and valiant young man, and of the Carajá tribe. On a soft bed of tobacco and cassava leaves they made love, tussling hotly under the sun.

"When they returned to their hut, lallygagging and carrying on, Imaerô's nose was really put out of joint. She cried, 'Tain-kang is mine! It was for me that he first came down from the sky!'

"'Tough luck!' retorted Tain-kang. 'When I was willing, you weren't; so now you can go and fuck yourself!' And with that he climbed into the hammock with Denaqué.

"'Never mind! The day of reckoning is sure to come!' muttered Imaerô unhappily; and she went out into the forest and turned herself into a bellbird which, in the stillness of the forest at noon, laments the perils of jealousy.

"It is thus due to the kindness of Tain-kang that the Carajá

today eat maize and cassava, and possess tobacco to keep up their spirits. It is certain, too, that Denaqué, who was insatiable, bestowed her favors on all the other little stars in the sky! She did indeed, and Tain-kang, who is the Evening Star, saw it all; until at last, his eyes misty with sadness, he went back into the vast expanse of heaven and there he remained, bringing down nothing more. If the Evening Star had continued to bring things from heaven to earth, heaven would be here for all of us. As it is, the world is only of our own making.

"There's no more!"

The parrot was asleep.

One day in January, Macunaíma was woken late by the ill-omened call of a manioc cuckoo. It was daylight, and the gloom of night had shrunk back into the lair, where it stayed all day. The hero shivered and clutched one of the charms hanging around his neck; he sought comfort from the touch of a small bone from a dead little heathen boy. He looked around for the parrot; it had vanished. Only the cock and hen were there, squabbling over the last of the spiders. The stagnant heat was so still that he could hear the tinkling of the grasshoppers' tiny glass bells. Vei, the Sun, gliding gently over Macunaíma's body, was tickling him as if with a girl's hand. Vei was doing this maliciously in revenge for the hero's not marrying one of her Daughters of Light. The girl's hand seemed to come and glide, oh so gently, over his body. What a delight to be getting the horn after so long! Macunaíma recalled how much had happened since he last made love. Cold water, they say, is the best thing for getting rid of such fancies! The hero slid out of his hammock, drew some filmy cobwebs around his body and went down to the Vale of Tears to bathe in a small pond nearby which the rising waters of the rainy season had turned into a lagoon.

Macunaíma put down the fowls carefully on the sandy beach and walked to the water's edge. The lagoon, which had been all covered with gold and silver like a veil, unmasked its face, allowing him to gaze clear down into the depths. Macunaíma could

see, deep down there, an extraordinarily beautiful fair-skinned damsel with a most seductive smile. This extremely lovely creature was Uíara, a siren.

She came toward him dancing to and fro, feigning reluctance, then ogling him; seeming to say "Keep off, you naughty boy!" then stepping back again with inviting movements. She made such a seductive gesture that the hero's body dilated and his mouth watered. "Mani!" was all he could gasp.

Macunaíma lusted for this charmer. He dipped his big toe in the water, and in an instant the lake changed and hid its face in veils of gold and silver. Macunaíma felt the coldness of the water and withdrew his toe.

This was repeated several times. It was now almost noon and Vei was becoming exasperated in the extreme. She had contrived this plot for Macunaíma to fall into the treacherous arms of the Lady of the Lake, and the hero turned out to be afraid of a little cold water. Vei knew very well that the lady was no lady, but a dangerous siren. Uíara advanced again with mincing steps. What a beauty she was! A brunette with rosy cheeks whose face was like the face of day surrounded by night; her fair complexion was framed by hair as black as the wings of a cacique, glossier by far than those of a raven. Her hard profile had a nose so winsome and dainty she could scarcely breathe through it. She was careful always to face to the front and to draw back without turning around so that Macunaíma couldn't see the hole in the back of her head through which the false creature breathed.

The hero could not make up his mind: yes he would; no he wouldn't. The Sun was furious. She lashed the hero's back with rays of heat like a cat-o'-nine-tails. With her arms thrown open wide, the Lady of the Lake was close up, displaying her charms and languidly closing her eyes. Macunaíma felt fire run up his spine, shivered with apprehension, and dived . . . Splash! The water closed over him. Vei wept with victory; her tears splashed into the lake like shower after shower of gold. It was high noon.

When he returned to the beach, it was evident that Macunaíma had been in mortal combat there below the surface of the

water. For a long time he lay prostrate with his life depending on his exhausted panting. He was bleeding from bites all over his body: he was without his right leg; he was without his fingers; without his great shaggy ballocks, without ears, without nose. He had lost all his treasures. At last he was able to move. As he counted his losses he was filled with a consuming hatred for Vei, the Sun. He was struggling to his feet when the Leghorn hen cackled, leaving an egg on the sand. Macunaíma grabbed it and tossed it straight at the Sun's gloating face. The egg smashed right on her cheeks, smearing them with golden yolk forever and ever, amen. It was afternoon.

Macunaíma sat on a rock which in olden days had been a turtle, and counted the treasures he had lost down below in the water. They were manifold. There was one of his legs; there were his fingers; there were his balls like great shaggy Bahian coconuts; his ears and his two ear ornaments, the Patek clock and the Smith & Wesson revolver; there was his nose; all his treasures. Then the hero gave a yell that sliced the end off the day; to top it all, the shoal of greedy caribes had taken his lower lip and with it his precious labret, the greenstone *muraquitã*, carved like a cayman. He went clean off his rocker.

He gathered together a pile of all the fish-fuddle he could find, timbo and hiari, bat-seed and monkey-ladder, all the fish poisons he knew, and he poisoned that lagoon for ever and a day. All the fish died and floated up to the surface. Blue bellies, yellow bellies, red bellies, bellies of every color speckled the surface of the lagoon. It was late afternoon.

Then Macunaíma gutted those fish, all the caribes and the dolphins and the fresh-water sharks, searching, searching for the amulet in one of their bellies. The place became a shambles; everything was stained with blood. Dusk was approaching.

Macunaíma hunted high and low, he combed and raked through all those entrails, he rummaged and he scoured, and he found his two ear ornaments, his fingers, his ears, his ballocks and his nose; and he sewed them back in place with satin-tail grass soaked in fish glue. But his leg and his labret he could not find.

They had been swallowed by the monster Ururau, who has the shape of a cayman and whom neither club nor poison can kill. The blood curdled black on the surface of the lagoon. Night fell.

Macunaíma went on searching in the dark. He felt and he groped and he probed and he scrambled and he turned upside down that monstrous heap of fish guts, uttering great cries of lamentation, drenching the whole neighborhood with the noise. The hero double-checked every square inch of that beach, hopping on his only leg. There was nothing. He yelled, "The keepsake! The memento of my she-devil! I can't see her, I can't see you, I can't see anything!"

He hopped around again. Tears fell from his blue eyes onto the little white flowers of the savanna and they became blue in sympathy, and are now forget-me-nots. The hero came to a standstill. He could do no more. He crossed his arms in a desperate gesture so heroic that everything expanded into space to contain the silence of his torment; only the tiny gnats still feebly harassed the hero's distress with their high thin whine: "Wee'eeve been een Meenas! Wee'eeve been een Meenas!"

By this time Macunaíma no longer saw anything to live for on this earth. Capei, the Moon, was shining up there in the great dome of the sky. Macunaíma wavered in the grip of indecision, not being able to make up his mind if he should go up to heaven or to the island of Marajó. At one moment he thought of going to join the energetic Delmiro Gouveia in his township of Pedra, but he lacked the spunk. To go on living as he had been living was out of the question; it was because of this life that he no longer found any zest in living on earth. His life, with so many adventures, so much love-making, such deceit, such suffering, such heroism, was in the end not worth living; and to stop in Delmiro's town or on the island of Marajó, which are of this world, made no sense at all. He lacked the spirit to straighten himself out. He made up his mind: "What of it! When the vulture becomes the harbinger of woe, it shits on those above it from below! This world has nothing for me anymore; I shall go up to heaven!"

He went up to heaven to live with his she-devil. He went to

become the beautiful but futile twinkling of yet one more constellation. Shining uselessly in the sky does no harm to anyone. He would at least be in the company of all the other forebears, with all those fathers of the people living on earth; those mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, betrothed and in-laws, all those relatives who now live the useless twinkling life of the stars.

He planted a seed of the turtle-ladder bush rope called Son of the Moon, and when it grew he tied it to a sharply pointed rock, and inscribed on this rock, which had at some time far in the past been a turtle, these words:

I DID NOT ENTER THIS WORLD TO BECOME A STONE

The plant grew fast and attached itself to one of the Moon's horns. The crippled hero took his fowl coop with the pair of Leghorns on one arm, and went climbing up the rope to heaven. In a sad voice he sang:

"Let us go and bid farewell
Swallow, goodbye!
Just like a singing bird
Swallow, goodbye!
Flapping wings to fly away
Swallow, goodbye!
Leaves but a feather in its nest.
Swallow, goodbye!"

Arriving in heaven, he knocked on Capei's door. The Moon came down to the terrace and asked, "What is it you want, little one-legged Saci?"

"Your blessing, my godmother. And some cassava bread, if it's no bother?"

Then Capei realized it was not Saci, the little one-legged Negro boy, but Macunaíma, the hero. And remembering how he stank, she wouldn't let him in. This irritated Macunaíma, who dealt her a few slaps in the face, which is why the Moon's fair countenance still has dark blotches on it.

Macunaíma then went to knock on the door of Kaiuanog, the Morning Star. Kaiuanog peeped out of the Judas-window to see who it was, and confused by the darkness of the night and his dot-and-carry-one gait, asked, "What do you want, little one-legged Saci?" But as soon as she recognized Macunaíma, the hero, she didn't wait for an answer, remembering the hero's fetid smell. "Go jump in the lake!" she snapped, slamming the shutter to.

Macunaíma made as if to cuff her, and retorted, "Go back to your beat on the street, you trollop!"

This gave Kaiuanog a terrible shock, and she stayed at the peephole, watching and trembling. That is why the beautiful Morning Star is so tiny and twinkles so much.

Macunaíma went on to knock at the door of Pauí-Pódole, the Father of the Crested Curassows. Pauí-Pódole had a soft spot in his heart for Macunaíma for standing up to the mulatto at the feast of the Southern Cross. But he exclaimed, "Ah, hero! It's very late for a call! It is indeed a great honor for me to receive in my flyblown hovel a descendant of the turtles, the first race of all. In the beginning the Great Turtle was the only living being. He went out in the silence of the night and produced from his belly a man and his woman. These were the original and first men on earth, and the first of your tribe. It was afterward that the others came. You have arrived late, hero! We are already twelve at table; with you there would be thirteen. I am very sorry, I weep to say it, but it is not possible!"

"What a bore, Commodore!" simpered Macunaíma sarcastically.

Then Pauí-Pódole took pity on Macunaíma. He conjured up a spell of all-embracing power by tying three sticks together and throwing them up in the air to form a cross. He turned Macunaíma with all his belongings—the cock, the hen, the coop, the revolver and the clock—into a new constellation, the constellation of the Great Bear.

It is said that a certain professor (German, of course!) goes around asserting that because it has only one leg, the Great Bear is really Saci, the little one-legged Negro boy. But no! It is not! Saci is still with us in this world, letting off fireworks and plaiting

the manes and tails of horses. The Great Bear is Macunaíma. And the hero himself, crippled with so much suffering on earth, lacking health and plagued with too many ants, abominating everything, has gone far away, and broods alone in the vast expanse of heaven.

Epilogue



This story is over and its glory has faded away.

There is no longer anyone left. Sorcery and bad luck have finished off the scions of the Tapanhuma tribe, one by one. The places they knew—those spacious savannas, those clefts and gullies, those balata bleeders' trails, those abrupt ravines, those mysterious forests—they are all now as solitary as a desert. An immense silence slumbers over the river Uraricoera.

No one on this earth knows how to speak the language of this vanished tribe, nor how to recount its flamboyant adventures. Who can know anything of the hero? His brothers, transformed into a leprous ghostly shadow, have become the second head of the Father of the King-Vultures; and Macunaíma became the constellation of the Great Bear. No one can learn any more the fascinating history and the speech of the extinct Tapanhumas. An immense silence slumbers over the riverbanks of the Uraricoera.

One day a man went there. It was before dawn, and Vei, the Sun, had sent her daughters to drive the stars away. The vast deserted forest had stifled the fish and the songbirds with terror, and nature itself swooned and lay abandoned over all. The silence was so immense that it extended into space like the trees of the illimitable forest. Suddenly a voice from the foliage jarred the aching senses of the man: "Curr-pac, papac! Curr-pac, papac!"

This squawking turned the man's insides cold with fright. Then he noticed the fluttering of a hummingbird that hovered at

his lips—"Whisht, whisht, whisht. . . . Therel A magic charm"—and flew quickly up into the trees. The man craned his neck to follow the flight of the hummingbird overhead.

"Pull the leaves aside, beefy one!" laughed the hummingbird, and fled.

There in the foliage the man discovered a green parrot with a golden beak looking at him. He said, "Come down, parrot, come down!"

The parrot came down and perched on the man's head, and the two went along together. The parrot started to talk in a gentle tongue, something new, completely new! Some of it was song, some like cassiri sweetened with wild honey, some of it had the lovely fickle flavor of unknown forest fruits.

The vanished tribe, the family turned into ghosts, the tumble-down hut undermined by termites, Macunaíma's ascent to heaven, how the parrots and macaws formed a canopy in the far-off times when the hero was the Great Emperor, Macunaíma: in the silence of the Uraricoera only the parrot had rescued from oblivion those happenings and the language which had disappeared. Only the parrot had preserved in that vast silence the words and the deeds of the hero.

All this he related to the man, then spread his wings and set his course for Lisbon. And that man, dear reader, was myself, and I stayed on in order to tell you this story. That is why I came here. I crouched in the shelter of the leaves, picked off my ticks, struck a few chords on my little fiddle, and with a sweeping touch started the mouth of the world singing in vulgar speech the deeds and words of Macunaíma, the hero of our people.

There's no more.

MÁRIO DE ANDRADE 1893-1945

Those who wish to acquaint themselves with Brazil's rich and varied folklore must begin with the works of Mário de Andrade, whose premature death deprived Brazil of one of its most talented writers at the very height of his career. A polymath, one of the most cultivated men of his generation; poet, essayist, sociologist, musicologist, novelist and educator, the emphasis in all his work is laid upon that which is authentically Brazilian. Not only did he lead a new artistic nationalist movement in his own work and in that of the group of young writers on whom he had such a marked influence; he organized and took part in trips to the remoter regions of Brazil to collect the folk songs of the people and make films of their customs and activities before they disappeared.

Famous as he is for his poetry, essays and short stories, his penetrating criticism of art and music, it is his "rhapsody" *Macunaíma* that gives him a place by himself in Brazilian literature. Translations of this book into Spanish, Italian, French, German and Magyar have already been published. A film and a play based on the same work have been successful inside Brazil, where the film won many prizes, while the play was rapturously received not only in Brazil but also in the United States and France, England and Germany. This translation attempts to transmit the flavor of Mário de Andrade's unique style.

The translator, E. A. Goodland, was born in England in 1911 and after graduating from Cambridge University became a chemical engineer. In this capacity he moved to Guyana in 1958 as technical director of a large sugar company. During his thirteen years in that country he traveled extensively in the interior, recording petroglyphs for the Guyana Museum as Hon. Curator of Archaeology, thus becoming acquainted with Amerindian communities and their folklore and with the varied fauna and flora, including ticks, ants, mosquitoes and razor-grass. On retiring to Pernambuco in 1972 he devoted much of his time to the translation of *Macunaíma*. He traveled widely in Brazil, visiting a curious rock formation near the Venezuelan border mentioned by Robert Schomburgk, who passed that way in 1838, as being "The House of the Spirit Macunaíma," and swimming the river Uraricoera. He also made arduous voyages by canoe on the Rio Negro and by stern-wheeler on the Rio São Francisco, observing much the same background encountered by Macunaíma himself on his way to São Paulo.