

Emily in the Amazon

By Tom Palmer



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It was a short cycle ride to the library for Emily. Now that she was 10 she was allowed to go there on her own, so long as she kept to the pavement through the park.

Summer had arrived in Leeds. Emily could hear birds singing as she propped her bike by the library door. Now she could go in and find a book. A book about anything.

In the library Emily looked along the shelves. She found books about films stars and fast cars, about Jessie J and Christmas Day, about milkshakes and earthquakes.

And then she saw a book about rainforests.

Emily leafed through the book. The first two pages were the most interesting. They were about a girl called Zeca who lived in the rainforest and was 10, like Emily. The book described her life in a village hundreds of miles from the nearest city. She lived in a ring of houses called a yano. She collected shells from the river shore to make into necklaces.

But Emily read that Zeca was worried. Worried that foreigners were coming to her rainforest. Foreigners who were planning to cut down all the trees.

Emily was gripped by Zeca's story. She had to know more. This was the book she would take home. She found her library card and went to borrow it. That's what she loved about libraries. You could choose *any* book and take it home. For free.

Outside the library Emily put her book in her cycle bag, then began to pedal through the park. *That* was when things began to go funny. Very funny. Emily felt dizzy. The trees around her looked like they were moving. She could hear strange screeches and clicks.

Then she fell off her bike.

Almost immediately a hand came out to help her. Emily looked up into a face and gasped. Not because she was injured. She gasped because because the face she was looking into was Zeca's. The girl from the Amazon book. She even had a shell necklace around her throat.

'Quick,' Zeca said. 'We must hurry.'

'Why?' Emily asked.



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'The foreigners are here. On boats. Coming down the river. If they find my little brother and sister by the water they will come to our village – and we may be in danger.'

Emily was very confused. But she knew one thing. She wanted to help Zeca. She had no idea why she was in the Amazon. But she knew she was. She could feel the heat of the air. Hear the sounds of the forest. Even smell the smells of the wet soil and the strange plants.

Emily leapt up and followed Zeca. She skipped over roots and long leaves that blocked the twisting track. And then she saw the river. It was like no other river she had even seen. So wide. Wider than a lake. And there, playing at the water's edge, she saw two young children. And beyond them, a boat. The foreigners Zeca had described.

Zeca spoke quietly. 'We must creep to the water's edge. Each of us pick up one of the children. Take them to the safety of the forest.'

Emily nodded. She had a hundred questions. Why was she here? Who were these foreigners? How was it that she could understand Zeca's language? But this was no time for questions. They had to rescue the children before it was too late.

The two girls dashed through the forest. Emily putting her feet where Zeca's had been. Making sure she didn't fall. Zeca pointed to one of the children and Emily lifted it and turned to run as fast as she could.

As she ran Emily could hear the child she was carrying laughing, thinking it was a fun game, not something far more serious. After a minute of running Zeca stopped. The child Emily had been carrying reached for its big sister.

'Thank you,' Zeca said, taking off her shell necklace and putting it round Emily's neck.

Emily smiled. Then she handed Zeca the child and sat down against a tree, breathing in deeply and closing her eyes. She was so tired.

Next Emily heard a familiar voice.

'Are you alright, Emily?'

Emily opened her eyes. One of her friends' grandmas was beside her.

'Did you fall off your bike, love?'



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Emily realised she was sitting against a tree. But not a rainforest tree: a tree back in Leeds. In the park. Her bike was on the floor.

Emily went to bed early that night. She was desperate to read her book. The Amazon Rainforest. She wanted to return to her adventure.

Leafing through the book Emily was amazed to see the pictures in there. Pictures that looked just like where she had been in her adventure. *Had* she been there?

Then Emily's dad came in to do bedtime. He was just home from work.

'Did you have a good day, sweetie?' he asked.

'Very good,' Emily grinned.

'That's great,' Dad said. 'What did you do?'

'I went to the Brazilian rainforest... and I met a girl called Zeca... and we rescued her little brother and sister, who were in danger... in fact the whole village was in danger, because of foreigners and the tree cutters... and I want to go to the library again tomorrow, Dad. I need to. Can we? Can we, Dad? And will you come?'

'Yes,' Dad laughed. 'I'll come.'

He bent down to kiss Emily.

'Goodnight, love,' he said. 'I'm glad you had such an exciting day.'

Then he switched off her bedroom light.

In the dark, alone, Emily could feel her heart beating hard like it had beating hard all day – after the excitement of the rainforest and the book she had read.

As she drifted off to sleep she remembered all the books she could have chosen at the library – about zoos and canoes, about how to dance and the Tour de France – and she tried to work out which book she would choose when she went to the library tomorrow with her dad. She hoped it would take her on as exciting adventure as today's book had.

Emily finally fell asleep, her hands touching a shell necklace around her neck.

