

HIDDEN TALENT
A Brazilian tale
Adapted by Carole L. Cooney

Setting: A long river bank with Pinda-ubuna trees

Characters:

Narrator

Paulo a parrot

Bento a beetle

Spotty a paca

Acai is pronounced ah-sigh-ee. It is a Brazilian bush famous for its berries.

Paca is a small rat-like creature that sleeps during the day and forages at night.

Narrator: It was a warm summer evening. Paulo perched on a low acai branch nibbling leaves and berries. He twisted his head as he noticed a slight motion in the long green grass.

Paulo: Well, how nice to see you this evening, Bento. Where are you walking?

Bento: Well, I have in mind to go on a long, long journey. Ouch! What was that?

Narrator: Spotty ran over Bento like a flash of lightning. Then, he came to a halt.

Spotty: Did I hear you say you were going on a long trip? (laughing) That's funny! Bento, you crawl *so slowly* it will take you a life time to reach your destination. Look at me! See how fast I can run! I'd be there in no time!

Narrator: Spotty began to run circles around Bento, but the little beetle just ignored him and continued creeping along.

Paulo: Spotty, be careful what you say. Little Bento might be slow, but he always gets where he wants to go. Hmm... Let's prove it. I know what you two might do. How about having a race?

Spotty: Aw, that will be *too easy* to win.

Bento: I'd like to try. What do you say, Spotty?

Spotty: Bento, are you sure you want to lose?

Bento: We'll just have to see who the winner is. Are you ready? Where shall we go, Paulo?

Paulo: All right. Go to the Pinda-ubuna tree that's by the river *as fast as you can*. I'll be there to give the winner a new coat as a prize.

Spotty: Oh, how I'd love a fine yellow coat with black spots like the jaguar. It would be so much better than my plain old brown and white fur with spots .

Bento: And I'd love a colorful coat just like yours, Paulo. Colors that shine and dazzle. Let's race!

Paulo: Get ready! Get set! 1, 2, 3... GO!

Narrator: Spotty dashed toward the river when he suddenly stopped.

Spotty: Why do I have to rush? Little Bento will take hours to crawl to that tree.

Narrator: And so, Spotty walked lazily to the river thinking about how grand he would look in a new yellow and black fur coat just like a jaguar!. Finally, he arrived under the Pinda-ubuna tree. A small voice greeted him. Spotty darted his large eyes left and right and up and down until he saw the grass at his feet moving.

Bento: My, oh my! What took you so long, Spotty?

Spotty: Bento, how did you get here before me?

Bento: I flew.

Spotty: (loudly) YOU FLEW! YOU CHEATED!

Paulo: (calmly) Now, now... Spotty. Bento didn't cheat. He just went the fastest way he knew how. Bento does not brag about his flying. His wings are always folded and he uses them only when he needs to. Just because you didn't know of his hidden talent, doesn't mean he shouldn't have flown to win. Did you go the fastest way you knew how?

Spotty: (grumbling) No. It's not fair!

Paulo: Spotty, I know you're a good sport. Bento did get here before you. Isn't that true?

Spotty (weakly) Yes. (gulp) Bento is the winner.

Narrator: Spotty sadly went away to his den among the river rocks wearing his plain brown and white fur coat. There he thought about the lessons he learned that evening - lessons about bragging and lessons about hidden talents.

Bento received a new coat of bright green with golden specks from Paulo. As the parrot cheerfully flew up into the Pinda-ubuna tree, Bento crawled happily through the lush grass with his new coat glistening in the moonlight.