



# THE DANCING TURTLE

A FOLKTALE FROM BRAZIL

*retold by Pat Betteley, illustrated by Marnie Galloway*

## Characters:

- » **Narrator 1**
- » **Narrator 2**
- » **Narrator 3**
- » **Turtle**
- » **O Pai:** Father, pronounced “oo PIE,”
- » **Jose:** son
- » **Maria:** daughter

**NARRATOR 1:** Many years ago, on the banks of the mighty Amazon River, Turtle played her flute in the warm sun.

**TURTLE:** I play notes high. I play notes low. I play them fast. I play them slow. I tap my toe. Then away I go!

**NARRATOR 1:** Turtle danced her happiest dance, twirling this way and that. She bobbed. She grooved. She busted out her moves. When she was done, Turtle pulled her head and legs into her shell and slept. Little did she know that a man was peeking at her from behind a wide, green leaf. She did not hear his stomach growl with hunger, or feel



him pick her up with strong, brown hands until it was too late.

**O PAI:** I have got you now! My family will enjoy turtle soup tonight.

**NARRATOR 2:** He walked home with Turtle and her flute in his bag.

**O PAI:** *Crianças*, children! Look at the fat turtle I have brought. I followed the sweet sounds of a flute to the riverbank where I found her dancing. When her song was finished, she went to sleep,

and I caught her. Run and fetch the cage. Tomorrow, we will enjoy delicious turtle soup.

**JOSE:** Here is the cage made of strong sticks.

**MARIA:** I will tie the door shut so she can't escape.

**NARRATOR 2:** The next morning, O Pai went to work in the fields.

**O PAI:** Take care of Turtle, and do not let her out of her cage for any reason. When I get home, we will cook her for supper.

**NARRATOR 3:** O Pai walked to the fields with his hoe, while the children played by the hut. Turtle thought and thought about what to do. Then, she had an idea. She began to play her flute.

**TURTLE:** I play notes high. I play notes low. I play them fast. I play them slow.

**NARRATOR 3:** Maria heard the sweet music and ran to the cage.

**MARIA:** Please, Turtle. Keep playing!

**TURTLE:** Playing the flute is unusual for a turtle, but I can dance, too.

**JOSE:** I have never seen a turtle dance. Are you trying to trick us?

**TURTLE:** Oh, no. You are too smart. All forest animals know that children cannot be fooled.

**MARIA:** But, if we let you out, will you try to escape?

**TURTLE:** Certainly not. I just want to show you my dance moves. Of course, if you do not want to see them, I can just put my flute away and go to sleep.



**JOSE:** No! Please, show us your dance.

**NARRATOR 1:** Jose opened the door and took Turtle from her cage.

**TURTLE:** I play notes high. I play notes low. I play them fast. I play them slow. I tap my toe. Then away I go!

**NARRATOR 1:** Turtle danced her happiest dance, twirling this way and that. She bobbed. She grooved. She busted out her moves. When her dance was done, she stopped.

**MARIA:** Do not stop. Keep dancing!

**TURTLE:** I must catch my breath. Put me under the shade tree, where I can cool down.

**MARIA:** *(setting her at the edge of the forest).*  
Are you ready yet?

**TURTLE:** Not yet. Let me take a quick nap. You two go play some games. When I am rested, I will play my flute.

**NARRATOR 2:** When the children had gone, Turtle crawled through the jungle until she was safely home by the river. Meanwhile, the children grew tired of their games and came to find her.

**JOSE:** Turtle, where are you hiding? You promised to dance for us again!

**NARRATOR 2:** No answer. Turtle had tricked them. Father would not be happy.

**JOSE:** What shall we do?

**MARIA:** I know. Find a large rock shaped like Turtle's shell.

**JOSE:** How about this rock?

**MARIA:** Perfect. We will paint it to look like Turtle and put it in the cage.

**JOSE:** I will tie the door shut with the rope again.

**NARRATOR 3:** When their hungry father got home, he put a pot of water on the fire. Then he opened the cage and pulled out the rock.

**O PAI:** (*whispering*) Turtle is sleeping. H-mmm. She is heavier than I remember.



**NARRATOR 3:** He dropped the painted stone into the boiling water.

**O PAI:** Bring me our biggest serving plate. It is almost time to eat.

**MARIA:** Here is the plate, O Pai.

**NARRATOR 1:** When O Pai dropped the rock onto the plate, it broke into pieces. O Pai looked at the rock, and then at his children.

**O PAI:** Did you let Turtle out of her cage?

**JOSE:** We did. We are sorry.

**MARIA:** She tricked us.

**O PAI:** Turtle is cleverer than I thought. Do not worry, crianças. Tomorrow, I will catch her again. Then we will enjoy our delicious turtle soup.

**NARRATOR 1:** Do you think O Pai was able to catch Turtle again?

