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# EMILIA
## AND THE HEART OF THE AMAZON

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# EMILIA AND THE HEART OF THE AMAZON

written by

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## Synopsis

Embark on a journey into the rainforest with this versatile, eight-character script by Kyle Adkins and Rachel Benjamin. “Emilia and the Heart of the Amazon” on Scriptmore is a captivating story that weaves a tale of self-discovery, adventure, and the profound importance of conservation.

Follow Emilia, a young city girl reluctantly thrust into the lush jungles of Brazil to reunite with her mother, a dedicated conservation scientist working among the native communities. At first wishing to be anywhere else on the planet, Emilia inadvertently strays from a familiar path while following the delicate dance of a morpho butterfly. What begins as a struggle to find her way back to camp becomes a transformative adventure. Through the dense foliage, Emilia unravels not only her initial distaste for the jungle but also discovers the hidden treasures of the “lungs of the planet.” Rooted in a South American folktale, “Emilia and the Heart of the Amazon” unfolds as a narrative of self-discovery. Emilia is challenged to perceive beyond the limitations of her senses and urged to listen and see with more than just her ears and eyes.

Originally written for a traveling children’s theater, this script can be performed and seen by all ages. It allows for lighting, set design, and even the potential use of puppets for some characters to be as complex or minimalistic as time and budgets allow.

## Cast of Characters

| | |
|---|---|
| EMILIA | A spirited, young American girl who despises the fact that her mother works in the Amazon rainforest. (Actor 2) |
| PAUL | Emilia's sick father whose life depends on Emilia's ability to find medicine. (Actor 1) |
| IRMÃZINA | A giant, legendary, Morpho Butterfly who has the power to morph into different forms. (Actor 3) |
| ADÃO | A young Ticuna boy who is skeptical of Emilia, her family, and their work in the rainforest. (Actor 4) |
| SIMÓN | A troublesome Spider Monkey who lives in the Amazon. (Actor 1) |
| TITI | A troublesome Spider Monkey who lives in the Amazon. (Actor 3) |
| MARIANA | Emilia's mother, a conservationist working in the Amazon rainforest. (Actor 3) |
| UBIRATA | A jaguar. Ubirata, can be a puppet, or simply an unseen character. |

## Place

Amazon Rainforest

## Director Notes

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

ACTOR 1: PAUL, SIMÓN

ACTOR 2: EMILIA

ACTOR 3: IRMÃZINA, TITI, MARIANA

ACTOR 4: ADÃO

ADDITIONAL DIRECTIONS

This script was originally written for a traveling children's theater and lends itself to creative design work. The costumes, sets, and lighting can be as simple or as elaborate as your budget permits.

Puppetry may be an option for some of the characters such as IRMAZINE, UBIRATA, and when EMILIA turns into a butterfly.

Many of the magical elements of the script will be enhanced by a strong lighting design, although lighting design is not an essential component of this production.

Although the scenes take place in many different locations, all of the locations are IN the Amazon. Thus, the changing of scenes can be accomplished by simply moving one or two set pieces (like the moving of a tree).

**Props**

Camping Equipment
Bag for EMILIA
Water Bottle or Canteen
Fire Wood
Spear
Fruit that the SPIDER MONKEYS can throw
Angel Trumpet's Flower
Long Blue Fabric to represent a river
Tree Bark
Flower

## ACT I

### Scene 1

Setting: A clearing in the dense rainforest on the banks of the Amazon River.

**ACTOR 3**

Welcome to the Amazon. There's magic here, can you feel it? If you listen closely you can almost hear the heartbeat of the planet. Here in the Brazilian rainforest, everything is connected by a complex web. Hundreds of mammal and reptile species, thousands of fish and bird species, millions and millions of insects--living together in a delicate balance. What happens when a new creature is introduced into this strange world? An American girl and her father, looking to reunite their family and start a new life in the Amazon...

*(PAUL and EMILIA enter, emerging from the trees with all their supplies to set up camp for the night.)*

**ACTOR 3**

Will Emilia and her father upset the natural order, or will they become part of it?

*(PAUL marvels at the forest around him, while EMILIA struggles with her gear.)*

**PAUL**

Look at this! Have you ever seen so many trees, Emilia? They say that one square mile of rainforest in the Amazon contains more species of trees than all of Europe. Can you believe that?

**EMILIA**

*(sans enthusiasm)*

Fascinating...

**PAUL**

It is fascinating! Your mother has been telling you about the Amazon since you were a baby. I thought you'd be more excited.

**EMILIA**

I'm jumping with joy. Can't you tell?

**PAUL**

Take a deep breath. Half of the oxygen in your lungs comes from this place. It's like a big oxygen factory. Listen.

*(PAUL closes his eyes and takes in the ambiance of the jungle. EMILIA battles the insects swirling around her.)*

**EMILIA**

I don't hear anything except bugs and birds.

**PAUL**

Exactly! Every bug and bird and flower and vine--they have a part to play. Soon, we'll have a part to play too. Scientists like your mom are studying this place...

**EMILIA**

...because they know how important it is to everyone's lives. Why are we doing this, Dad?

**PAUL**

What do you mean?

**EMILIA**

Mom left us.

**PAUL**

She didn't leave us. Your mom is doing important work here. She's working with the Ticuna people to protect this place.

**EMILIA**

What about our family? Isn't that important?

**PAUL**

That's why we're here. Your mother needs to be in the Amazon to do her work. She's invited us to share it with her.

**EMILIA**

But why do I have to leave my school and all my friends in Santa Fe to move to the middle of the jungle?

**PAUL**

There's a school in the Ticuna village. Your mom says there are plenty of kids your age to make friends with.

**EMILIA**

Mom obviously cares more about this place than she does about our family.

**PAUL**

Your mother loves you more than you will ever know. But some things...some things are bigger than us. Sometimes we have to make sacrifices.

**EMILIA**

So how long do we stay? Until people stop cutting down trees?

**PAUL**

Look, this isn't easy for me either. I wish we were all back in our cozy little home in Santa Fe, eating our familiar meals. And I know this place is not cozy or familiar...

*(He wipes the sweat from his forehead, and struggles to form his words.)*

**PAUL**

But we're a family that supports each other. We stick together. So tomorrow, we're gonna get back on the boat for the last leg of our journey. I miss your mom. And I know she misses you too.

**EMILIA**

If she missed us, she'd come home.

**PAUL**

Emilia-

*(PAUL reaches out to EMILIA but erupts in a fit of coughing and must sit down.)*

**EMILIA**

What's wrong, Dad?

*(She feels his forehead.)*

**EMILIA**

You're burning up. You have a fever!

**PAUL**

It's just a little cough.

**EMILIA**

I can't believe this. We should be at home where I can take care of you.

**PAUL**

I'm fine.

**EMILIA**

You don't look fine.

**PAUL**

It’s nothing.

*(another fit of coughing)*

**PAUL**

I’m going to lay down in the tent and rest for a bit. Don’t stay by the fire too long. Big day tomorrow.

**EMILIA**

I’ll go find some water for you.

**PAUL**

No, Emilia! Promise me you wont go out into the jungle alone.

**EMILIA**

You have a fever. You need lots of water.

**PAUL**

Promise me!

*(He coughs and nearly collapses. EMILIA steadies him.)*

**EMILIA**

Okay, I promise. Just get some rest...

*(EMILIA helps her father into the tent.)*

## Scene 2

Setting: A clearing in the dense rainforest on the banks of the Amazon River.

At Rise: EMILIA comes back to the fire and slaps another mosquito.

**EMILIA**

Some place. Everything here is trying to suck my blood or stick me with thorns or infect me with some sickness.

*(A giant Morpho Butterly, IRMÃZINHA, appears. It flutters its wings of iridescent blue before landing on a branch near EMILIA.)*

**EMILIA**

Except for you. You're the biggest butterfly I've ever seen. You must be a Morpho Butterfly. I saw your picture in a book once. Mom said you were the most beautiful butterfly in the Amazon. At least you're not trying to kill me.

*(EMILIA pounces to catch IRMÃZINHA. It evades her and dances around above her head. IRMÃZINHA speaks in the voice of EMILIA's mother.)*

**IRMÃZINA**

Emilia...

**EMILIA**

Mom? Is that you?

*(EMILIA searches for the source of the familiar voice. IRMÃZINHA flutters away.)*

**IRMÃZINA**

Emmie...

**EMILIA**

Mom! Where are you?

*(EMILIA follows the voice away from her camp and into the dense forest.)*

**ACTOR 1**

This is what happens in the heart of the Amazon. Sometimes you hear a familiar voice on the wind, or see a familiar face among the trees. Is Emilia imagining things? Or did she find some magic in that butterfly with her mother's voice?

*(The jungle morphs and shifts as EMILIA moves through it.)*

**EMILIA**

Are you there?

*(She waits for a response, then gives up. IRMÃZINHA dances nearby.)*

**EMILIA**

Great. Now I'm hearing voices.

*(to IRMÃZINHA)*

How do you do it? This place makes me want to curl up and hide, but you dance through the trees like nothing can hurt you.

*(EMILIA puts out her hand, and IRMÃZINHA lands softly.)*

**IRMÃZINA**

Your mother is waiting...

*(IRMÃZINHA takes off for the deeper parts of the jungle.)*

**EMILIA**

Hey! What did you say? Were you talking to me?

*(She follows IRMÃZINHA into the deep forest.)*

**ACTOR 1**

She's getting farther away now. Away from her camp. Away from her sick father. Chasing the mysterious butterfly into the deepest parts of the jungle.

*(EMILIA tears through the trees, weaving in and out, always a step behind IRMÃZINHA.)*

**EMILIA**

Stop! I want to talk to you.

*(IRMÃZINHA hides in the canopy. EMILIA tries to get her bearings.)*

**EMILIA**

What did you mean, 'my mother is waiting'?

*(IRMÃZINHA silently disappears from the stage. EMILIA is left alone, turning in place to locate the butterfly.)*

**EMILIA**

Where did you go? Hello? What do you know about my mother?

*(She waits for a response. Nothing but the sounds of the jungle.)*

**EMILIA**

Nothing. Because you're a Morpho Butterfly and I'm imagining things.

*(She starts offstage, but doubts herself.)*

**EMILIA**

No...I came this way.

*(Again, she halts.)*

**EMILIA**

Hmm...That looks familiar. It all looks familiar.

*(She tries another path and reemerges where she started.)*

*(Through the trees, ADÃO-a boy of the Ticuna-observes, unseen.)*

**EMILIA**

This isn't good. Hey, Dad? Dad, where are you? Anybody? No, no, no. I can do this. I'll use the sun to navigate.

*(She looks up and tries to position herself.)*

**EMILIA**

Except that I can't see the sun through all the trees...My footprints.

*(She crawls in the dirt, searching for her own tracks to follow.)*

*(ADÃO creeps forward, spear in hand.)*

**EMILIA**

So I stopped here. I doubled back here. Oh, all these tracks lead in circles! That can't be right.

*(She follows her tracks to the feet of ADÃO. Slowly, she realizes the danger.)*

**ADÃO**

Oi!

**EMILIA**

Hola?

**ADÃO**

O que você está fazendo aqui? [What are you doing here?]

**EMILIA**

That's not Spanish. I thought they spoke Spanish in South America.

**ADÃO**

Você está no Brasil. [You're in Brazil]

**EMILIA**

Brazil! Yes!

*(She speaks slowly, miming her words.)*

**EMILIA**

I...am visiting...Brazil.

*(ADÃO moves his spear closer.)*

**EMILIA**

What language do they speak in Brazil? Think, Emilia! You tried Spanish. Is it French? Bonjour!

*(ADÃO is unmoved.)*

**EMILIA**

Nope, definitely not. Come on, Emilia you know this...

**ADÃO**

We speak Portuguese.

**EMILIA**

Portuguese! Of course-wait. You understand me?

**ADÃO**

Don’t move! The poison on the tip of this spear could kill you with a scratch. What are you doing on our land?

**EMILIA**

Nothing-

**ADÃO**

You can’t be here.

**EMILIA**

I’m not here to hurt you.

**ADÃO**

Oh really? That’s what they said when they came for the rubber trees. And again when they came for the gold. And the timber, and the fish.

**EMILIA**

Who did?

**ADÃO**

Did you come to slash and burn the land to plant some foreign crops? Or are you just a poacher?

**EMILIA**

I’m not a poacher.

**ADÃO**

Then why are you here?

**EMILIA**

I’m just lost!

**ADÃO**

And I’m supposed to believe that? The smoke has hardly cleared from the last fires.

**EMILIA**

What are you talking about?

**ADÃO**

We don’t need your hydroelectric dam. Why don’t you just leave us alone?

**EMILIA**

If you just show me the way to the river-

**ADÃO**

Why? So you can pluck out all the fish and starve my people from here to the Solimões River?

**EMILIA**

The Solimões? You’re a Ticuna! You don’t understand, I’m your friend. My mother works with your people-to protect your land. She’s a conservationist.

**ADÃO**

A conservationist...

**EMILIA**

Yes. She loves this place.

**ADÃO**

And who are you?

**EMILIA**

I’m just a kid. Emilia...

*(She puts out her hand for a handshake. ADÃO doesn't take it, but lowers his spear. EMILIA breathes a sigh of relief.)*

**ADÃO**

You're lucky I believe you. I might have used this spear. You never know who's an enemy.

**EMILIA**

Well, I'm not an enemy.

**ADÃO**

What are you doing out here all alone?

**EMILIA**

I'm not alone. I'm here with my father.

**ADÃO**

I don't see him.

**EMILIA**

He has a fever. He went inside our tent to rest.

**ADÃO**

Your father sent you out to find a cure alone?

**EMILIA**

No. You see, I saw this butterfly and it was talking to me, and it sounded like my mom, so I followed it and-

**ADÃO**

The Morpho Butterfly. You heard Irmãzinha's voice?

**EMILIA**

I know, I'm imagining things. You don't need to make fun of me, okay? I'm going back to camp.

*(ADÃO sits and watches EMILIA. She starts one way, then stops and looks around, questioning herself.)*

**ADÃO**

Do you need help?

**EMILIA**

Not from you. You were rude-pointing that thing at me.

**ADÃO**

Fine. Make your own way. But can I give you a piece of advice?

**EMILIA**

And what is your advice, wise one?

**ADÃO**

Only a fool travels into the jungle alone.

**EMILIA**

I’m not a fool.

**ADÃO**

Where did you say your camp was?

**EMILIA**

It’s...by the river, somewhere.

*(ADÃO becomes suspicious again.)*

**ADÃO**

The river...You’re not with the Corporation, are you?

**EMILIA**

The Corporation?

**ADÃO**

The Corporation that came to build the dam. The one that will drive out my people and drown my village.

**EMILIA**

I don't know what you're talking about.

**ADÃO**

The hydroelectric dam.

**EMILIA**

The hydro-what?

**ADÃO**

Of course you have no idea. Nobody cares about the people of the Amazon.

**EMILIA**

I told you, my mom is a conservationist. She cares about this place more than her own family.

**ADÃO**

If your mom is really trying to help, she is wasting her time.

**EMILIA**

Clearly, you don't know my mother.

**ADÃO**

Whatever she has come to do, my people will no longer exist after this dam is built.

**EMILIA**

What do you mean?

**ADÃO**

You should hurry back to your camp, Emilia. Daylight is fading fast.

**EMILIA**

Don’t tell me what to do.

**ADÃO**

I’m trying to help you.

**EMILIA**

By calling me a liar and shoving poison spears in my face?

**ADÃO**

If you’re going to travel through the Amazon, then you must learn the way of the Amazon.

**EMILIA**

What does that mean?

*(IRMÃZINHA enters. The forest shifts around them as EMILIA discovers its magic.)*

**IRMÃZINA**

The trees. The wind. The animals of the forest. The soil beneath these roots. The sweet rain from the sky.

**EMILIA**

Ha! I knew you could talk!

**ADÃO**

The tiniest insect and the mightiest crocodile of the river.

**IRMÃZINA**

We protect each other.

**ADÃO**

Depend on each other.

**IRMÃZINA**

For food.

**ADÃO**

For shelter.

**EMILIA**

What kind of magic is this?

**IRMÃZINA**

This is the way of the forest.

**ADÃO**

It is the way of the Amazon.

**IRMÃZINA**

When one part suffers, we all suffer.

**EMILIA**

Everything’s connected...

**ADÃO**

Even you are a part of the rainforest now.

**EMILIA**

Me? I’m from the city. I just got here.

**ADÃO**

You hear Irmãzinha’s voice. You are special, Emilia.

**IRMÃZINA**

The waters of the Amazon flow through your cities and into the oceans of the world.

**ADÃO**

The trees of the Amazon breathe air onto the winds and into your lungs.

**IRMÃZINA**

We're all connected. Even you.

**EMILIA**

I'm not a part of this. I don't understand this place like my mom does.

**ADÃO**

You must listen with more than your ears. And see with more than your eyes.

*(She closes her eyes and tries to see. IRMÃZINHA exits.)*

**EMILIA**

I don't see anything. I don't hear anything.

**ADÃO**

Then you will never find what you are looking for.

*(ADÃO starts offstage.)*

**EMILIA**

Wait! How do I get back to the river?

*(ADÃO points her in the right direction.)*

**ADÃO**

Your camp is that way.

*(He starts again to leave but turns back.)*

**ADÃO**

Give your mother my thanks. It is a lost cause, but people like her are what the Amazon needs.

**EMILIA**

I will.

*(ADÃO exits and EMILIA heads in toward her camp.)*

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## Scene 10

Setting: The Corporation's camp, barbed wire and floodlights.

**ACTOR 1**

In the Amazon, everyone plays their part. Ubiratã creates a distraction. Irmãzinha flies ahead to find the Cinchona Tree. Simón swings through the branches to get the bark. And Emilia...

**ACTOR 4**

Emilia is the voice. Their plan is a good one, but will it be enough to save Emilia's father? Will it be enough to save the boy's home?

*(EMILIA, IRMÃZINHA and SIMÓN enter, getting into place outside the camp.)*

**IRMÃZINA**

You heard the boy. We must hurry!

**SIMÓN**

I don't see it.

**EMILIA**

Irmãzinha will help you find the Cinchona Tree.

**SIMÓN**

Ah yes. The brie!

**IRMÃZINA**

The tree.

**SIMÓN**

Right. That's what I said. Let's go!

*(SIMÓN charges ahead, but EMILIA holds him back.)*

**EMILIA**

Stop! They'll see you.

*(SIMÓN tiptoes backwards.)*

**SIMÓN**

Then what do we do?

**EMILIA**

We wait for the jaguar. I'll give the signal.

*(They wait, but no sound is heard.)*

**IRMÃZINA**

Perhaps the boy has failed.

**EMILIA**

No. He won't fail. He can't...

**SIMÓN**

He's jaguar food. Let's get this over with.

**EMILIA**

No! Just wait a little longer.

*(Silence from the jungle.)*

**EMILIA**

Please...please...

*(The roar of the jaguar is heard.)*

**EMILIA**

Now!

**ADÃO** *(offstage)*

Ubiratã! Go!

*(SIMÓN and IRMÃZINHA take off into the camp. UBIRATÃ lets out a terrifying growl. In the camp, sounds of workers clambering and scurrying in fear. IRMÃZINHA returns.)*

**IRMÃZINA**

They ran! All the workers are leaving.

**EMILIA**

Did it really work?

**IRMÃZINA**

They don't look like they're coming back.

**EMILIA**

Where's Simón?

**IRMÃZINA**

I lost him in the chaos.

**EMILIA**

He ran away. He was scared of the jaguar.

*(SIMÓN enters with the Cinchona bark, unseen.)*

**IRMÃZINA**

I'm sorry, Emilia.

**EMILIA**

Now what am I supposed to do?

**SIMÓN**

Now what, what?

**EMILIA**

Simón!

**IRMÃZINA**

Simón!

**SIMÓN** *(grandly)*

I present the tree.

**EMILIA**

You mean the-

**IRMÃZINA**

You mean the-

*(They realize SIMÓN got it right this time.)*

**EMILIA**

The tree!

**IRMÃZINA**

The tree!

**EMILIA**

The bark from the Cinchona Tree. You did it! Thank you, Simón.

*(EMILIA kisses SIMÓN on his head. He squeals in protest, wipes away the kiss and mumbles as he begins to exit.)*

**SIMÓN**

Human worms. Squirms. Germs!

**EMILIA**

Hey, Simón!

*(EMILIA tosses him a piece of fruit.)*

**EMILIA**

Thanks.

*(SIMÓN exits happily with his fruit.)*

**IRMÃZINA**

Quickly, Emilia. We must bring the cure to your father.

**EMILIA**

Wait, where is...the boy? I don’t know his name. He helped save my father’s life-my life-and I don’t know his name.

**IRMÃZINA**

We must hurry. Your father doesn’t have much time.

*(They exit with the bark.)*

## Scene 11

Setting: A clearing in the dense rainforest on the banks of the Amazon River.

At Rise: The stage shifts back to EMILIA's camp.

**ACTOR 2**

Only when we see the parts of the Amazon working together can we appreciate its magic. It is this unity-between a butterfly and a monkey, a jaguar and a human, a girl and her father-that makes the Amazon truly special.

**ACTOR 4**

Once you've seen the heart of the Amazon, you are changed. You are given a new knowledge. What we do with that knowledge when we leave the Amazon is up to us.

*(EMILIA helps PAUL out of the tent. PAUL sits sipping the Cinchona bark tea, regaining his strength. EMILIA goes to IRMÃZINHA, who is flitting around the edge of the clearing.)*

**EMILIA**

Thank you for helping me find my way back. And thank you for everything.

**IRMÃZINA**

Thank you for your voice. Don't forget to use it.

*(IRMÃZINHA exits. EMILIA sits with her father while ADÃO observes, unseen.)*

**PAUL**

This tree bark of yours may have saved my life. You're an amazing child, Emmie. I know this hasn't been easy. Your mother will understand if we get on the next boat down the river and head home to Santa Fe.

*(EMILIA considers this.)*

**EMILIA**

Dad, do you think Mom can really save this place?

**PAUL**

She's certainly going to try. Some people don't believe in protecting the Amazon.

**EMILIA**

But change will never happen if we always wait for others to start. Do you think there's anything I can do to help? With Mom's work?

**PAUL**

I'm sure she could use someone with a mind like yours.

**EMILIA**

Then I want to stay. Even if we can't fix everything at once, we can do our part.

**PAUL**

Your mother will be happy to hear you say that. But first we have to get there. Are you ready to catch this boat?

**EMILIA**

I think I am.

**PAUL**

Alright, let's do it.

*(They start to exit, but EMILIA spots ADÃO through the trees.)*

**EMILIA**

I'll meet you at the boat. I just need a minute.

*(PAUL goes ahead and EMILIA turns to ADÃO.)*

**EMILIA**

Oi!

**ADÃO**

Oi!

**EMILIA**

I don’t know your name. I’d still be lost in the jungle without you.

**ADÃO**

Adão.

**EMILIA**

Adão...

**ADÃO**

The worker’s camp may be deserted for good. Our homes are safe for now.

**EMILIA**

If they do come back, I’ll stand up for you.

*(ADÃO picks a flower and hands it to EMILIA.)*

**ADÃO**

Here...

**EMILIA**

You’re not trying to poison me are you?

**ADÃO**

No, this one’s not poisonous. It’s just pretty.

**EMILIA**

It is.

*(ADÃO begins to exit.)*

**EMILIA**

Adão! I won't forget you.

**ADÃO**

Promise?

**EMILIA**

Promise.

*(ADÃO nods and exits. PAUL returns to check on EMILIA.)*

**PAUL**

Ready to go?

**EMILIA**

Yes. I'm ready to go home. Our new home.

*(They leave together for the boat.)*

*(END)*




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