The life of Moyses and Abraham Pinto in the Amazon Jungle (1879-1893)

as told by Abraham Pinto (1945)

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together with
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These memories from my childhood and throughout the long life that God has granted me are being put to paper at the request of my loving nephews, sons of my beloved brother, Moyses, and of my family. I am doing so gladly but with the condition that they not be published but remain solely within the family as a record of my life.

Let me start by expressing gratitude to the Almighty who has saved me from countless perils and has granted me the good fortune to have never been deprived of the most basic necessities for a comfortable and peaceful life. My gratitude goes also to my beloved sister-in-law, Alegrina, as well as to my beloved nephews[1], sons of my always-remembered and dear brother, Moyses, who have shown me the same degree of generosity and love that a loyal son would show his own father. I thank them and may God bless them and grant them all of the happiness in the world.

I was born in Tangier on the 27th of December, 1862, to modest, loving parents. My father, a humble tailor, worked tirelessly to support a large family. Despite his modest situation, he was able through his kindness and honesty to win the friendship and affection of many of the more prominent members of the community.

At the age of six, I entered the Alliance School to learn my ABC's. By dint of effort and application, already at nine years old – not to seem immodest – I proved a precocious student and won the notice and appreciation of my teachers, which, in turn, inspired me to study harder. In Hebrew, I was one of the more advanced students, and at the age of twelve or thirteen had the good fortune to be the student of Reverend and Holy Man Rabbi Moses Toledano, may he rest in peace. My progress and ability as a student were such that at the age thirteen my English teacher, Señor Moses Hayim Nahon, made me his assistant; I would teach mathematics, Spanish, and miscellaneous other subjects to a class of thirty to forty boys. For this work, which continued for two to three years, I received two douros[2]] a month. And although the material was not as advanced as it is nowadays, we learned more than enough to prepare us for life.

This was the kind of simple, uncomplicated life that I had enjoyed up until the age of sixteen, when began my odyssey to South America.

I wish to declare on my word of honor that the narrative before you is accurate in every way - even if some details may seem exaggerated.

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[1] Jacques, Abraham, Elías, and Momo

[2] 1 Douro equals 5 Pesetas.

In 1864, my uncle, Abraham Serfaty, my mother's brother, went to Brazil on a sailboat. It took him almost four months to reach the town of Pará. Two years later his brother, Elias, followed. They went there to seek their fortunes and over the course of twelve years of toil gathered a small nest-egg of more or less 3,000 douros each.

They returned to Tangier in 1877. Still young bachelors, they decided to marry and start families. But, between some poor business decisions and general living expenses, they lost their savings after only two years. They contemplated returning to Pará, where they had a number of contacts and some experience in the local business landscape.

The first to go back were my beloved Uncle Elías and his wife; they brought with them my beloved brother who was 18 and employed at the offices of Senores M. & Y. Benasayag for the meager salary of four douros a month. Despite his young age, my parents consented gladly to the trip: Elías was a kind and loving man, and they knew he and his wife would treat him like a son.

On January 1, 1879, they boarded the James Haynes, a small steamship headed for Lisbon where they planned to connect with a far larger steamship to Pará. My poor Uncle Elías, however, wound up not having enough money to buy the tickets, which came to fifty pounds, and was forced to write an old business acquaintance, B.R. de Andrada Y Cunha, for a loan. On their previous trip to Pará he and Abraham had had many dealings with this man, and had always met their obligations.

In those days, communications were so difficult, and ships so infrequent, that it took nearly three months to receive the money. In Lisbon, they faced many anxious days of scarcity and were forced to borrow money from Moses Benchimol just to survive. Finally, the money arrived; they paid their debts and embarked for Pará. While in Lisbon, Abraham had also taken advantage of the long wait by taking my brother, Moyses, to the Hospital of San Luis, where he was admitted. He had a medical condition known as a "fistula" and luckily they were able to operate and cure him. By then, my Uncle Abraham and his wife, Maknin, sister of Senora Hola Abensur, had a one-year-old child. When they ran out of money, he too considered returning to Pará to seek his fortunes anew.

I was sixteen at the time and begged my Uncle Abraham to bring me along. Happily, both he and my beloved parents consented. On Friday, May 16, 1879, the same year of my brother's departure, we set out for Lisbon on the Cynthia, a small, two-hundred-ton steamship loaded with cattle. It had no cabins, so we camped out on the deck with the animals; we set down the mattresses we had brought with us, and on which we would sleep the two nights it took to reach Lisbon.

It would be too painful to describe in detail the scene of my parents saying goodbye to me at the port, seeing off the second of two young boys leaving for such a remote place that neither of us, nor they, knew anything about. Ultimately, though, they so entirely trusted in a Providence that had thus far protected all of us, and in the kindness and goodness of our uncles, that they resolved to let us go: as my father was a robust and pragmatic man, he knew to

suppress his private feelings in light of the larger imperative of our eventual success -- seeing, especially, as there were such few opportunities in Tangier, where only misery and poverty awaited.
Lack of money prevented me from bringing much clothing. All I had were two jackets, two pairs of denim pants, and a pair of sandals. My luggage consisted of a small suitcase that I bought for four reales in a bazaar in Tangier, and in which I put one of my two jackets and a pair of pants along with a few other items. This, along with the four remaining reales in my pocket, were all I had. And I will add that as I boarded, my suitcase fell in the water and everything got soaked.

We arrived in Lisbon on Sunday, May 18, and were met by my uncle Jacob Serfaty, Abraham's brother, who was always going between Lisbon and Spain selling trinkets at street fairs. We went straight to Rua de San Pablo no. 90, where, on the third floor, lived Moses Benchimol. There, we rented two small rooms on the small fifth floor, basically an attic, and settled there while waiting for the money to arrive from Pará from the same business connection that Uncle Elías had reached out to. By then, Abraham had barely 200 pesetas left, and we spent two miserable months of uncertainty awaiting the money for our steamer fares. Ultimately I was forced to sell one of my two suits for two douros to a certain Haim Cohen from Tetuan who also intended to embark with us for Pará. Finally, the money arrived and we boarded the steamer Lanfrank, an old, five-hundred-ton cargo ship built decidedly for transport, not comfort.
Uncle Abraham and his wife had a third-class ticket with partial first-class privileges for the sake of the baby. I was not given a cabin and had to sleep in the dining room or lounge, whichever was available on a given night. When the first-class passengers left the dining room, I would eat with the waiters. Thank God for the abundance of food on the ship, especially after all the privations we suffered in Lisbon!

It took us more than twenty days to reach our destination. We arrived at the port of Pará with the happiness and relief you might expect would accompany the completion of such a long voyage across the ocean. After disembarking we went directly to the home of Elías, where he lived with his wife and with my brother, Moyses. It was an immense joy to be reunited.
Upon our arrival, we learned that my dear Moyses had been stricken with yellow fever and had been at death's door. He had been vomiting black bile, and the doctors offered little hope of saving his life. By some miracle of Providence, though, he survived, and I found him in good health. In those days, yellow fever was common and a threat to all travelers. Nowadays, thank goodness, it no longer exists.
Due to my inexperience I nearly contracted the fever myself as I made the mistake of buying fruit from a local shop the day after my arrival. The fruit, called mango, is a real poison for foreigners. The day I ate it I developed a high fever and my poor brother and my dear uncles were frantic with worry as soon as they learned what I had done. They gave me a strong purgative made of castor oil; fortunately, my fever soon broke and I recovered within days.

My dear brother had some extra clothing and gave me one of his suits that I might be a bit more presentable. During their previous stint in Brazil, Abraham

and Elías had worked separately, each in different parts of the Amazon, and hardly saw each other over the next twelve years. Now reunited in Pará once again, they decided to start a firm together under the name Serfati Irmaos. We spent over a month in Pará gathering the necessary merchandise, roughly 200 English pounds' worth, which we secured on credit through previous business connections.

My uncles had set their sights on a distant town called Teffé, roughly 1,500 miles up the Amazon, as their new base of operations. We bought space for ourselves and our merchandise on the small steamer, Augusto, which we boarded a day early in order to stow our belongings. That night, a huge panic erupted on board. Some valve had been left open, flooding the engine room, and nearly sinking the ship. The call for assistance went out, but luckily the crew managed to pump the water out and the fix the problem in time. Thankfully, our merchandise was in a separate part of the hold and did not get wet. We sailed up the Amazon for twenty-five days before reaching Teffé. Along the way we stopped at Santarém, Óbidos, Coari, and other small villages lining the river. At each stop, the ship would unload some merchandise, sometimes requiring an overnight stay.
I remember fondly spending a whole day in Coari, which was situated by a large lake, and getting our hands on some fishing lines and hooks. There was such an abundance of fish that with no experience and almost no effort at all we caught sixteen tambaquis between us, weighing ten to twelve kilos each, such that by the end our hands were cut and bleeding from all the pulling on the lines. The tambaqui is very similar to the grouper which we have here in Tangier, in shape, color, and texture of meat. In the end, though, we gave all the fish to the men in charge of the pantry, and I can assure you we tasted not a nibble since we travelled in third class, and the prepared meals were reserved for first class.

One of the passengers on the ship was a man named Abraham Elazar who was already established in Teffé and who provided us with valuable information about our destination. Surrounded by an immense expanse of water roughly the area that separates Tangier and Tarifa, the town itself was very picturesque. It was comprised of fifteen or so thatched-roof huts and four or five houses with tiled roofs, which seemed positively palatial next to the pitiful straw huts. There were three hundred or so inhabitants, primarily mestizo Indians, but also a few civilized people, among them Señor Salomon Levy and his family. Mr. Levy hailed from Gibraltar and was a cousin of Mama Hanna; he had a wife, Dona Tomasia, and a son, Yuyu. Leon Barchilon and his wife were also there, as well as our friend, Abraham Elazar, who arrived on the same ship as us. Since we had no home, our merchandise was unloaded onto the beach and left out on in the open air while my uncles went immediately to the home of Señor Levy, who was a very kind, honorable, and distinguished gentleman, and who would help us find a place to live. Incidentally, that night I spent the entire night on the beach guarding our merchandise until the next day when we carried everything to our new home. While our house was being fixed up, we ate our meals at Señor Levy's home. He welcomed us warmly and helped us with all aspects of settling in to our new home.

Teffé's inhabitants, who subsisted primarily on fishing and coconut-gathering -- coconut groves abounded in the forests that surrounded the huge lake -- were a gentle, placid people, and we always lived in peace and harmony among them. Our business consisted of bartering merchandise in exchange for rubber, coconut, sarsaparilla, salted fish, vanilla, and copaiba oils, which are extracted from local trees and used as medicine for some illnesses. We would collect these natural goods and send them to our correspondents in Pará who would sell them on our behalf. Little disturbed our peaceful life, which was very inexpensive and easy to sustain.
A few days after settling in, my uncles bought a canoe which they outfitted with a canopy made of palm leaves. They hired Indian rowers, loaded the canoe with merchandise worth roughly 50 pounds, and sent my brother, Moyses, down some nearby estuaries to trade with the locals that lived in huts along the banks. With no prior experience, he carried out these expeditions with only God's guidance and returned to Teffé fifteen days later with a pretty good haul, and to my uncles' great satisfaction. In the ensuing months he gained confidence bit by bit and substantially increased his profits.

A few weeks later it was my turn: another canoe, more small trips, etc. After six months of this, my uncles decided to send us out on larger canoes so we could go further and take more merchandise. My brother, Moyses, went to the Javari river, about ten-days' travel aboard a small steamship with canoe in tow carrying the merchandise. Once there, he got in his canoe and spent the six months of the rubber season going up and down the river, trading where he could. When he ran out of merchandise he would return to Teffé to resupply in exchange for a portion of the rubber he had collected. When the harvest was over, he would row back from the Javari – a twenty-to-thirty-day trip -- and trade with the natives along the Amazon.

I got my own large canoe and like my brother set off on a small steamer with canoe in tow for the upper Amazon, to a town called Tabatinga, near the Peruvian border. There I climbed into my canoe with my goods stashed safely on board and drifted down the river doing small deals with natives living in huts along the water's edge. Two months later, I returned to Teffé, only to repeat the entire trip two or three times, consecutively. This continued until the early part of 1880, which coincided with the end of the rubber season which runs typically from July to January.
It's hard to describe the joy my brother and I felt upon reuniting in Teffé after six months of working on the river. I can only thank God that despite our lack of experience, the multiple incidents and dangerous situations we faced, from the dense woods filled with wild animals to the various dangers on the rivers, that we were nevertheless able to conduct our business safely and successfully, all of which truly pleased my uncles.

Between February and April of 1880 we stayed put in Teffé taking advantage of the idle time to caulk and paint our canoes so that we would be ready for the May-to-December rubber harvest. Now more experienced, we would embark on larger trades along rivers still further away. This time my brother set out for the Jurua river, about a month's sail by steamer, and spent a full seven months going up and down the river, trading with locals. I did the same along the Javari

river, so we didn't see each other again until our return to Teffé at the end of the rubber harvest.
Our uncles had advanced us the merchandise for these long trips, a few hundred pounds' worth, and we were to split profits with them, fifty-fifty. I cannot describe the joy and pride we both felt the first time we sent money to our parents in Tangier: initially four pounds a year, with an extra three or four pounds each for the High Holy Days. Later, with our uncles' help, we established fixed monthly sums of two and five pounds for my mother and father, respectively. Every three or four months we would receive letters from them. We would also write them regularly from those remote locales and you can imagine the happiness we all felt reading the letters; them, I expect, as well as us.

Later in my story, when the time is appropriate, I will tell you about some of the many dangers and close calls we faced on our voyages, both in the forests and the rivers.

Great geographical distance did not mean we forgot the religion of our fathers. When leaving Tangier, we each packed a copy of the Yom Kippur prayer book so that we could celebrate this holy day properly. In Teffé, before leaving on our trips, we always marked the next holiday on the calendar so that we could meet somewhere and celebrate together. Many times while on the Jurua, even when we were months' distance apart, he in one canoe, me in another, we would always write each other to plan where to meet for Yom Kippur. When we finally met, our rowers would build a hut in some removed spot in the woods and light fires that they would tend through the night to ward off snakes and wild creatures. With our canoes secured to the banks, our helpers stood guard each with Winchester in hand ready to shoot any beast that wandered too close. One time our guards killed a jaguar that came near the hut; but even this did not take us away from our prayers.

In Tangier, I had a childhood friend named Mimon Toledano. He was the son of Rabbi Josua Toledano, a very kind and highly religious man. The Rabbi also had a daughter, Gimol Toledano, Mimon's sister, who was married to Jacob Nahon. Mimon, who was my age, desperately wanted to come to Brazil with me but his father did not want him to. As I was preparing to leave Rabbi Josua asked me to his house and begged me not to entreat his son to come, which I promised not to do. One year later, though, in 1880, I was on my canoe in the Javari when I suddenly spotted him on an arriving steamboat. I decided to bring him with me on my canoe, and it was wonderful to have a dear friend by my side in such a remote place. Mimon, who in Brazil went by "Mauricio," remained with me for two years and I was devastated when he suddenly got sick and we were forced to return to Teffé, where he eventually died.
The month Mauricio arrived in the Javari, on the Eve of Yom Kippur, we had gone to an abandoned cabin near the river bank. There, we lit a small candle and started our prayers when we suddenly heard the guards yell for us to shut the door, followed by gunshots. When they told us to open the door a little bit later, we saw a huge jaguar lying dead on the ground in front of us.
The rubber harvest was ending on the Javari river; I was supposed to proceed to Teffé, where the harvest ended in January and started generally in July. The

Javari runs along the Peruvian border, with Brazil on one side, Peru on the other. It's not a wide river, only 250 meters or so across, but it is very deep and runs nearly 800 miles. From there it splits into three – the Javari itself, the Tarahuaca, and the Envira, all of which are quite long, if not very deep. The Envira crosses parts of Peru and Ecuador, at a place called Nazareth, technically Peruvian land.

One time, I had just moored my canoe in Nazareth when a small steamboat appeared sailing from Pará towards Iquitos stopping in all points on its westward trajectory. Tired from my six or seven months on a canoe, I decided to take a break and steam to Iquitos, a Peruvian village five days' sail from Nazareth. I left my canoe and my rowers there on the Javari and continued west, now as a tourist.

The day after the steamship ship left Nazareth we arrived at a place called Tabatinga, a Brazilian fort on the border with Peru. Located on the bank of the Amazon, this "fort" had but four soldiers, one commander, and two very antique cannons. The ship had to dock for the night to get permits to enter Peru, so I decided to disembark and walk around a bit. The town itself consisted of a single shack for the commander, another for the soldiers, and a third in which to my utter shock I ran into Haim Nahon de Tetuan, the fellow to whom I'd sold my denim suit a year earlier in Lisbon.

We were both quite shocked to find each other in such a remote place so far from the world! It seems he had settled there and built a little shop, trading with fishermen and "caucheros" -- rubber harvesters -- who passed through. He kindly offered me a can of sardines which we shared with some farinha. He then insisted I stay the night since my boat didn't leave until the morning. Unfortunately, he had one mosquito net, which he used, so I settled into my hammock to enjoy, as you will now hear, a truly delicious sleep. The next morning, you see, I tried in vain to swing my feet off the hammock as my foot was stuck to the hammock with what seemed like glue which, incidentally, turned out to be what likely saved my life. Since it was still dark indoors and I felt so weak, I had to yell to my friend to please come open the outer door so I could see what in the world was going on with my foot. It was then that I saw the puddle of blood on the floor, and my foot covered in dried blood. It seems a bat had spent the night sucking on my foot while I slept. Once the bat had gotten its fill and flown away, we surmised, and with the blood still flowing, I must have shifted my foot such that the gash stuck to the hammock, acting like a bandage.

From Tabatinga the ship sailed into Peru and towards a small village called Loreto where the Brazilian Consul General had his offices. We continued on, stopping in places like Pebas, Manai, etc., until we finally reached Iquitos. I had in fact made this trip to and from Iquitos before with my canoe, going along the upper and lower Amazon, reaching points as far as Teffé, Manaus, and Pará. I would do this trip several times and later found very precise descriptions of these places and waterways in Jules Verne's book, "La Jangada".

Iquitos in the 1880's was a small village of about one hundred inhabitants with but a few huts and two or three houses covered with roof tiles. I can say that this trip to Iquitos, which was supposed to be a mere vacation, turned out to be, through God's grace, a financial blessing: although a very poor village, by virtue of its location at the mouth of four rivers it was extremely rich in rubber

and other resources too long to list here.
I loved this little town. Its inhabitants were a gentle, peaceful people who furthermore spoke my native Spanish, which delighted me and made me feel like I was among my own people. We spent eight days amidst their graciousness and hospitality and came away very much enjoying our time. Afterwards I took the same boat back to my canoe in Nazareth and continued from there back to Teffé. When I got home I was very happy to see my brother, Moyses, and told him about my trip to Iquitos and all I saw there. I also told him I thought there might be a future for us if we ever decided to move there.

At the time it was still too soon to make such a move, though, because our business was still quite small and we were in partnership with our uncles. We therefore had no choice but to continue as we had been doing until 1882, by which time we had earned roughly 600 pounds: so we gave half to our uncles and terminated our partnership. Now with our small capital of 300 pounds and a letter of recommendation to the seller in Pará, my dear brother, Moyses, went back to Pará and purchased 800 pounds' worth of goods, giving the seller our 300 pounds and taking the rest on credit. We were now independent and with no one to account to but ourselves. I have the pleasure to inform you that the very first invoice advanced to us by my uncles for 50 pounds in 1879, as well as the accounting records pertaining to the dissolution of our partnership with our uncles, which also show profits from two to three years of work, and all in my beloved brother Moyses' hand, I have kept here in my office. I showed them to Momo a few days ago.
Bringing with us the merchandise my brother bought in Pará we settled in a tiny village called Caisara, located about seventy miles from Teffé. There we rented a hut and started our business. At the start of the rubber campaign we each went down a different river, splitting the goods between us. When leaving Caisara we closed the shop until our return seven months later. Usually my dear brother went to the Jurua and I headed to the Javari, which put about 1,000 miles between us. Later, because the Javari was less rich in resources, we both confined ourselves to the Jurua, each on our own canoe – but even then we saw each other only once the entire time because the distances were so great.

Things went on like this until 1888, when I finally convinced my brother that we should settle in Iquitos. As our sales had grown and our business correspondents were very happy with us, my brother agreed to go to Pará and managed to acquire forty "Contos"[3] – i.e., 4,000 pounds' worth of merchandise -- and brought them back to Iquitos, Peru, at a time when there were still no border duties. Thus began our time in Peru, at which time my brother decided to stop trading via canoe.
As for myself, I continued trading via canoe on the Jurua until 1893, the last year of that onerous lifestyle, which ended rather abruptly with the sinking of the steamship Presidente de Pará, when I lost all I owned: merchandise and rubber (neither insured), jewelry I had for sale, money, books, even the babuchas (Moroccan slippers) on my feet. Since the ship sunk close to a beach, everyone jumped and swam to shore. Not knowing how to swim, I alone stayed

[3] 1 Conto = 1 million Brazilian Reales

on board, afraid to jump in. I felt the boat disappearing under me as I clung to the foremast while everyone on shore yelled for me to jump. In the end I jumped in, giving myself up to God's mercy. I started to flail and drown when one of the passengers rescued me.

I will now relate to you a very interesting story about something that happened to me on the beach and which will remind you what a small world it is, after all. During my first trip from Teffé to the Javari in 1881-1882, our boat arrived and docked in the village of Tomantinos, where, as it turned out, Rafael Foinquinos and his wife, Sara Attias, had settled. (Her daughter, Rahma, incidentally, still lives here in Tangier.) The captain of the ship, I remember, was an officer of the Brazilian marines, well-educated, refined, pleasant. At any rate, suddenly the mayor of Tomantinos, a man named Señor Acevedo, comes aboard and I remember how out of respect and good manners neither the captain nor any of us sat at the table until the mayor himself sat down to eat. I also remember how out of the blue some man showed up in his underwear -- apparently, he was fond of cachaça[4] and had forgotten to put on his trousers.

Later, on the return trip from Nazareth to Teffé, I went back through Tomantinos and after an hour of drifting on my canoe I saw a very large beach in the distance, maybe bigger even than the one in Tangier, with several small huts, which was a bit unusual for these remote parts. As I approached, I saw many men occupied in some mysterious sort of work. I disembarked and learned they were making manteigia, which is oil made from turtle eggs.
The process is rather unusual. Around the months of September-October, the municipalities of Tomantinos and Forteboa (also close to this beach) place a man on the beach in a small hut. His job is to keep anyone passing in a canoe from coming close so as not to scare the turtles which will crawl onto the beach at night to lay their eggs. On a moonlit night, a single turtle will come out of the river and wander all around the beach; the following day, traces of its steps are visible on the sand. The next night the same thing happens, as if the creatures were testing the suitability of the area. The guard, meanwhile, needs to remain hidden and quiet throughout the process and cannot even light a fire in his hut. On the third night, a school of turtles turns up, maybe thousands of them. People say that up to 20,000 turtles can turn up to lay their eggs. Each turtle then digs a hole in the sand about forty centimeters deep, a feat accomplished with either front or hind legs, and each single turtle can deposit up to 120 eggs. They then cover the eggs with sand and press the sand down with their chests. The beach will be literally packed with eggs. The turtle egg is round, about the size of a hen's; its yolk is very oily.
Once the turtles have deposited all their eggs, hundreds of people hidden in canoes in a corner of the beach will rush over and flip the turtles onto their backs to prevent them from running away. They will then pick them up one by one and take them into the nearby woods and set them down in the shade, belly up, to protect them from the hot sun.
The ones who manage to escape run back to the river but in so doing they encounter a different danger, as crocodiles hide in the shallows waiting to make a small banquet out of them. The ones who escape into the woods don't fare

[4] Cachaça is a type of liquor

much better, as jaguars also lurk at the edges of the forest looking to make tasty treats out of them as well. It was not unusual for us to have run-ins with either of these beasts when trying to snatch a few turtles for our own consumption. It was times like these when the Winchester we carried with us day and night finally found its use.

The oil preparation consists of the following: The Indians would fill their small canoes with all of the eggs they could dig up with their shovels. They then open the eggs using sharp wooden skewers and add a certain amount of water to the contents, leaving the water and egg mixture exposed to the sun. By the next day an oily layer an inch thick would form on the surface. They would then skim this substance and boil it in a cauldron on fires made with wood from the forest. Once reduced, the product was complete. They would then pour it into large twenty-liter cans that the Indians acquired in advance for this purpose. After welding the cans shut the oil was ready for export. The oil is very rich in flavor and used for cooking, but is also used by the passing river steamships.
As for myself, after witnessing all of this, I wasted no time: With my two rowers by my side I went into the forest and chopped down trees which I fashioned into poles which I planted deep into the sandy beach. I then mounted over them a palm-leaf roof to protect us from the sun and the rain, and using two more poles, hung myself a hammock. Now that I had a proper hut I unloaded the merchandise and rubber from my canoe and stashed it inside. With the canoe now empty, we did as the others did and within three months we filled sixty cans of oil. (I had bought the empty cans from nearby traders who sold them for a shilling a piece.) I also bought two hundred full cans from other traders and paid them with credit at my uncles' accounts in Teffé. I loaded all my cans on the next steamship leaving for Pará which happened to have been anchored near the beach. In Pará, my uncles' representatives would collect them and bring them to market. This was my first major deal, but it turned out to be a bit of a disaster. I ended up losing one third of the value because a lot of other producers from a number of beaches along the Amazon had manufactured a lot of oil as well, flooding the market, and dropping the price to just a pound per can.
After three months of harvesting oil we were forced to leave the area because the river began to surge, slowly flooding the beach; additionally, the few remaining eggs started to mature, eventually producing baby turtles which would pop out the sand and crawl to the river -- often only to encounter the lurking crocodiles near the bank which would swallow them up by the thousands. For our part, we scooped up entire baskets of the little creatures which when boiled made for tasty eating.

I do want to tell you the strange following story: while I was busy harvesting oil from the turtles' eggs, a 300-ton steamboat called the Morrua dropped anchor across from our beach. A small boat was then lowered from the ship and came towards us. Naturally we were curious and as we approached the boat one of the men announced himself and claimed to represent the commander of the ship who was apparently interested in buying turtles to add to the ship's menu. We told him that we did not sell turtles but that he could easily go into the woods and fill his boat himself with turtles without paying us anything. The commander was so impressed by our graciousness and honesty that he invited

us to lunch on the ship. Eight or ten of us went and were served beef steak, something which we had been deprived of a long time since on the beach and the river we subsisted generally on turtles and fish.
The owner of the steamship also happened to be on board. His name was General Reyes. This General Reyes was sailing from Pará to the Putumayo River, about 3,000 miles away. The Putumayo flows into the Amazon near Iquitos, and I was well acquainted with that particular part of it. The river is not very wide but is quite deep and can be sailed upstream for about 600 to 700 miles until at the higher elevations you come eventually to waterfalls and mountains.
The Putumayo runs through three countries. Tracing backwards from its mouth in Brazil it winds upstream about 150 miles to the border with Peru where there is a small military post with five soldiers and a commander and a Brazilian flag flying high on a pole. It then traverses northern Peru for 200 miles until it crosses into Colombia where at the southern border Peru has its own small military post. It then enters Colombia and continues to its source amidst a landscape replete with cascarilla, which is to say, quinine.

"Cascarilla" is what they call the bark of the Cinchona tree and is indeed the source of quinine. So you may have an idea, I will now relate to you the conventional history of how quinine was discovered.
One day, a missionary was walking through the woods trying to convert wild Indians and found an Indian languishing on the ground with a very high fever. He then saw the man crawl to a puddle of water and drink from it. A few hours later, he was completely recovered. The missionary gave other sick Indians the same water and they too got better. Apparently, a fallen Cinchona tree had been lying in the puddle and the contents of its bark had bled into the water. The missionary deduced the connection and thus quinine was discovered.

General Reyes had hundreds of Indians working for him stripping and collecting bark from these trees. He would fill his ship, return to Pará, and from there export the bark to England and to North America. In those days, quinine was very expensive. The general made these trips for three years and made a fortune. Now wealthy, he returned to his native Bogotá, went into politics, and became the president of Colombia. Sometime during his presidency, one of his brothers went to Iquitos to take care of some pending business and died suddenly while there; upon hearing the news, the grieving president implored the Peruvian government to send his brother's body to Bogotá. Notables from the municipality of Iquitos -- the prefect and other authorities -- accompanied the body on a small navy ship all the way to Pará. The journey from Pará to Bogotá, incidentally, is very long and complicated: one has to navigate the Atlantic southward from Pará all the way around to Valparáiso, Chile, and from there go up the Pacific to the mouth of the Magdalena River where Bogotá, the capital of Colombia, is situated.

Years later, in 1910, my wife Preciada and I were sitting in the plaza of the Carlton Hotel in Vichy when we noticed this little old couple close by. We were told that the gentleman was ex-President Reyes of Colombia and was now retired from politics and living in Paris. The woman with him was his wife. I went up to him and communicated the following:

“My General, I decided to take the liberty of approaching Your Excellency to inform you that I was one of those that accompanied your deceased brother from the cemetery in Iquitos to Pará, Brazil, aboard the Peruvian navy ship.”
He stood up, pulled up an empty chair, and asked me to sit. He then peppered me with questions: “Was I from Iquitos?” “Was I Peruvian?” I told him that I had lived there several years doing business and that I was not Peruvian but was in fact from Tangier, Morocco. He asked that I describe the voyage with his brother’s body in detail, which I did. He also asked if I happened to know a certain gentleman who had been a minister in Bogotá while he had been president who now lived in Tangier. I told him that in fact I did know him: my wife Preciada, you see, had some time ago befriended the gentleman’s wife, and the two visited almost daily. A few days later Reyes left for Paris. I tell you this story of General Reyes so you may appreciate what a small world this is.

To pick up my earlier account regarding the foundering of the Presidente de Pará, I should first tell you that many months before that event my brother and I were already working independently and without any of our former business relationships in Pará. For one, the Bento company had become quite successful and sold its business before returning to Portugal. Its successors were not able, or did not want, to give us the same credit that the Bento company had given us, so we liquidated our accounts even though we still owed about 3,500 pounds. So we signed promissory notes agreeing to make trimonthly payments plus interest, all of which we paid religiously, including the very stamps for the letters.
In a few months, after calling in some debts in Iquitos and Teffé and making a few sales to boot, we were able to put together some 2,000 pounds. I then used all of the money to buy merchandise in Pará for the rubber harvest in the Jurua, carrying it as usual in my canoe behind a steamship. This is in fact when we sank and I lost everything I had in the world except for the small amount of merchandise we still had in Iquitos, where my brother, Moyses, your father, was living. Your father of course knew nothing of the shipwreck, as any possible communication would have required sailing down the Jurua all the way to Manaos followed by a month-long steam steam to Iquitos. Near where we sank, a local man offered to house and tend to the castaways until we could be rescued, which came finally in the form of a ship from Manaos heading to the upper Jurua. Much to my joy and disbelief, my uncle Elías was one of the passengers. He immediately lavished me with warmth and clothing, as I had been stranded with a single pair of pants and a shirt.

At that particular time, rubber was the cheapest I had ever seen it, at 1,800 reyes per kilo. I figured the price could not possibly stay so low, that it would have to rise, so I started buying rubber very aggressively on credit with payments scheduled every 90 days. By then we were very well known on the Jurua and people were happy to sell us goods on credit. I bought a very large quantity and sent it to both Pará and Manaos with strict instructions not to sell until I gave word. Once my purchases were concluded, I embarked for Teffé on that same boat, and as other boats passed from the opposite direction we waved them over to ask the price of rubber. The first announced a modest rise; but with each subsequent ship, a higher and higher price was announced such that by the time we reached Teffé, rubber had reached 6,000 reyes per kilo, over

three and a half times my cost.
As I explained earlier, my brother, still in Iquitos, had not heard from me for many months. One day, however, a ship from Pará arrived in Iquitos and before the boat even docked all the local traders and businessmen flocked to the bridge to yell down and demand news, principally the price of rubber. It was then that one of the passengers, a friend, yelled up to your father that the Presidente de Pará had sunk in the Jurua River, but that I had been rescued. You can just imagine your father's frantic reaction: straight away he closed down our place of business and sailed for Teffé. When he got to Teffé, I had not yet arrived, so he went straight to Manaos to consult the several commercial houses holding the rubber I had sent ahead and decided then and there to sell it all lest prices drop. After paying all my loans, we walked away with 8,000 pounds' profit.
When I reached Teffé, I heard that my brother Moyses had been looking for me but that he had gone on to Manaos. I went to Manaos myself in the hopes of meeting him there, and I cannot describe our joy upon finally finding each other. It was on that precise day in 1892 that I remember telling your father that I was finally just too weary from my life on canoe, that I was tired of the Jurua, of Teffé, of all of it, and that I wanted a more settled existence in Iquitos.

Thus ended fourteen years of a rugged life on the river, facing uncertain risks, suffering periodic financial losses, and I am truly grateful to the Almighty for all of his blessings and for his protection during those difficult years.

But before I tell you about our new business in Iquitos, and of your father's trip to Tangier that same year, I want to tell you about an incident that happened to me on the Jurua while I was on my canoe. There was an individual from the province of Ceará who was a well-known thief and an assassin and who regularly terrorized the area. He would go into people's homes and take by force whatever he wanted. Everyone was afraid of him, but I myself had never had any contact with him despite all my travels on the river. One day, as I was docking my canoe by a small house on the river's edge, a short man climbed into my canoe and sat himself at the prow.
"Hey Jew! -- Give me some cachaça!"
I, sitting at the stern under my awning, yelled back, "Get out of my canoe right now!"
He says to me, "Do you know who I am?"
I told him that whoever he was, he needed to get out now.
"I am "the terror of Jurua!""
When I heard that name, I picked up the Winchester and pointed it at him repeating my command to leave. This type of criminal always carries a skinny knife that can be thrown from a long distance at those he chooses to kill. But he made no use of it this time, instead calling me "Brave Jew" and telling me I was the first courageous Jew he had ever met. He then approached me, put his hand on my shoulder and, now sudden friends, I gave him some cachaça and we parted on friendly terms.

I would also like to relate an incident that happened to a client of mine on the Ukayali River near Iquitos. He was a Spaniard, a good and honest man – he had once told me where he lived -- and one day he went hunting with a friend. They

went deep into the woods and came across a herd of wild boar. Feeling threatened, the men began shooting at the animals indiscriminately to keep them at bay. But the more they shot, the more boars appeared, until there were too many to count. Now out of bullets, the men were forced to climb trees to escape certain death. All night that night the boars gnawed at the roots and trunks of the trees, weakening them, until, fearful, one of the men tried to jump onto a neighboring tree. But the two weakened trees fell to the ground bringing the man down with them, and the poor soul was devoured in an instant. The victim was the Spaniard's friend, and the Spaniard, who somehow outlasted the herd of prowling boar, would years later relate that story to the Spanish newspaper, El Imparcial, and we in turn would read it right here in Tangier.

I also want to tell you about the piano I gave as a gift to my sister, Sol. In 1888, I was sailing on a ship on the Jurua and met a passenger named Kahn. He was from Alsace, had a home in Manaos, and was a powerful businessman with a big trading house in Paris. One day, a steamship coming the other direction brought us mail and I got a letter from my mother explaining how happy she was that my sister Sol was taking piano lessons. Given my family's humble background, and being as we were of such little means, this piece of news made me very happy and proud. I explained all of this to Mr. Kahn, with whom I shared my sleeping cabin, and he replied that if I so chose, he could arrange to have a piano shipped to my sister. I gave him my father's address, and after a few months he told me that he had sent the piano, at which time I repaid his expense of 60 pounds. The piano caused a bit of a revolution in Tangier. Who could have dreamed that a modest family like ours living as we did on the ground floor of a synagogue with just two small rooms and a kitchen could ever own a piano, let alone a Pleyel, which was a very famous make? You can just imagine the effect on the community for a family like ours to suddenly acquire such a rare and fancy piano!
Dear nephews, your mother is sitting next to me right now and will not let me write about the negative reactions and comments that were directed at her and at my mother because of this piano! Many of the daughters of the more prominent families in the community, it seems, had become envious of my sister's piano and our family suddenly became the object of gossip and resentment. Tangier, you see, was very small then and some of the richer families apparently could not accept that the lowly Pinto family should suddenly come out of the shadows. One Saturday, a man came to our house. It seems he was being harassed by his daughters regarding the piano and the man wanted to confront my mother. Whatever he said, by the end of the visit my mother was in tears. Incidentally, the piano in question still exists and is owned by the Labos family.

I have likely forgotten a majority of the strange incidents that occurred during my canoe adventures, but I do remember one other incident that occurred on the Japura River. This river also flows into the Amazon, and has three mouths -- one near Teffé, one above Fonteboa, and the third below Teffé. It is quite wide but not very deep and is mostly uninhabited because it flows through an area rife with cannibals. Being adventurous by nature, I decided to explore this river and see what business I could do: I entered at the mouth near Teffé and rowed three days upstream but did not see any homes or anyone with whom I could

do business.
I resolved therefore to turn around and head back to Teffé but it soon got too dark to navigate. Luckily I spotted a beautiful beach ahead on which to spend the night and directed my rowers to head there, and later fish for our dinner, which wound up being quite tasty. We then put down our mats -- my rowers slept on either side of me – and hung our mosquito nets after which I tucked my Winchester by my side and placed a piece of white cloth under my head for a pillow. Suddenly, from the depths of sleep (we were all thoroughly exhausted) I heard a hushed and agitated voice calling me: "Senor Abraham! Senor Abraham! Get up!" I sat up and squinted through the mosquito net at the moonlit night and could just make out two shapes on the beach moving towards us.
We slipped out of our mosquito nets, ran to the canoe, and pushed out to the middle of the river leaving behind everything that we had on the beach. We then pulled out our rifles and began shooting -- and although I don't know how many we killed, what we were shooting at, we soon realized, were in fact six jaguars.

The alarmed voice that woke me that night belonged to a black man from Bahia named Malaquias. He was fiercely brave, esteemed me greatly, and had been my trusted rower for many, many years. I had another rower named Ventura; he was an Indian from a tribe of cannibals from the Japura River. In 1880-1881, while in Caicara, a mestizo Indian heading to the Japura to collect workers for the rubber harvest offered to bring me back an Indian which he would secure in exchange for whatever small trinkets -- fake pearl necklaces, fake bracelets, metal rings – I could provide him.

Five months later he showed up with an entirely uncivilized and wild fifteen-year-old Indian boy. We named him Ventura and he rowed for me for fifteen years, but would later turn into a drunk and a thief. After two or three years working with me, he asked for permission to visit his home. He left on a small canoe that I loaned him and returned to us four months later.

For some years we also had an Indian from the Tucumas tribe that was brought to us by Mr. Leon Maimaran from the Ukayali River region. My brother, Jaime, would later bring him to Tangier to live with us and bought him a horse on which he loved to ride. Later he would return to Iquitos with one of us and worked as a cook for a few more years.

I realize I have not spoken about my brother, Jaime, who left Tangier for the Jurua in 1888, staying for a couple of years, and going from there to Iquitos. He was a very likable, kind, jovial young man, esteemed by all who knew him, and because of these qualities had a great facility with governmental departments such as customs – and also with our clients. He did not work there many years as his health was poor, but when he did, he was very effective.

Now to return to my account of how I reconnected with your father, Moyses, in Manaos in 1892, when we decided to continue our joint business in Iquitos on a larger scale. We made the decision to split the 8,000-pound windfall from my rubber investment: we left 4,000 in Para with me, and my brother took the rest

to Tangier. Immediately upon arriving he was to take 2,000 of that to Manchester, England to buy merchandise, leaving the other 2,000 in Tangier with our family. I meanwhile liquidated all of my business operations in Teffé and the Jurua, essentially forfeiting all we were owed in these places, and went straight Iquitos to wait for the new merchandise to arrive from England. We did not know anyone in Manchester, but my father was very friendly with a certain Mr. Yahia Benasayag, who was the Moroccan representative of the English firm, Henri de Manchester. Mr Benasayag was a nice man and so happens was also a relative of my mother's, so my father asked him for a letter of recommendation to the parent company in Manchester, where he hoped to open an account with his 2,000 pounds as down payment.

When I got to Iquitos I discovered that when my brother had sailed to Manaos to look for me after the shipwreck, very little of our store of merchandise remained there. But so as not to be idle, I decided to take some of the money from Pará and began buying and selling common Brazilian products like farinha and other articles -- granted, a rather modest enterprise, which several people, like some of the associates from the trading house, Marius & Levy, roundly mocked, facetiously complimenting me on having such a "grand" business operation. Another fellow, a Frenchman, also ridiculed me, predicting that when these supposed goods arrive from England they would be so extraordinarily numerous and valuable that I would need policemen to guard them. I suffered these mockeries privately, and simply waited. Time passed and six months later I still had not received any merchandise from your father.
Since there was no place in Iquitos or Manaos to do so, I decided to return to Pará to send a telegram to inquire about the long delay. Eventually his reply arrived informing me that he had in fact never gone to England at all because of the divorce of our sister, Sol, which I had heard nothing about. Last news I had had was that she was getting married! I resolved therefore to go to Tangier and the very next day boarded the Lanfrank, the same ship I had taken from Lisbon in 1879, only now completely refurbished and modernized and of higher tonnage.
When I arrived in Tangier I immediately bade your father hasten to England with the letters from Benasayag. Meanwhile I stayed in Tangier three more months and got engaged before returning to Iquitos. For his part, your father never returned to Brazil after 1892, but we nevertheless managed to begin together this far more lucrative chapter of our business career.

Now I will tell you how Providence punishes pride and scorn, of which I had been the victim at the hands of the huge firm, Marius & Levy. Marius and Levy had offices in Paris, Manaos, Iquitos, and had 12 million francs in capital -- roughly half a million pounds -- which was a lot in those days. But as the years passed, they started to do less well, even reneging on many payments, including a 760-pound promissory note that had been issued to me in London, and which I would have the satisfaction of formally protesting in court. Also, I remember one day during our peak years when three full ships arrived in Iquitos with huge containers of goods for our firm. One came from Liverpool, having made stops in Hamburg, Le Havre, Antwerp, and Lisbon, while the other two came from Pará and Manaos. There was so much merchandise – from Denmark, Sweden, Spain -- that our storage rooms simply could not hold it all.

Some items like alcohol could not get through customs so we had to leave them overnight until we could find storage space. And thus was fulfilled the Frenchman's prediction: that night I was compelled to hire two policemen to guard our expensive merchandise.

The transcription of these memories was started by Abraham, son of your sister Donna, and is now continued by Jacky, his brother. I have not spoken about my brother Samuel thus far because I've resolved to forgive and forget.

There are a few small details in my story that I will forget and then remember later.
When we left the turtle beach, for example, which was called Curasatuba, we loaded our canoes with all the turtles we could carry. As for the hundreds that remained on the beach, we flipped them back over onto their feet so that they could crawl back to the river. Also, the Putumayo River I mentioned earlier is not navigable near its source because of waterfalls and tall mountains which is why the deceased brother of the President could not be taken to Bogotá by river.
Of all the strange incidents that your father experienced in Brazil I have probably forgotten most, but I do remember one which nearly cost him his life. He had a canoe on the Jurua River that he had left with a friend for safekeeping after the rubber harvest. A few months later when he went to pick up the canoe, he found it filled with rain water. To empty it, he and his rowers rolled up their pants and climbed in, at which point your father collapsed into the canoe from what was evidently an enormous electric shock. The source of the shock was an electric eel, or "puraque;" and if an Indian had not been nearby and ready with a special metal ring that will shield the electrical current, and which thus allowed him to quickly pull my brother out of his canoe, after just one or two more shocks, my brother would have been a corpse.

Many are the experiences I had during my canoe trips, and I suddenly remember a few more of them.
One time, as I rowed into the mouth of Lake Caicaru, a mountain of water suddenly appeared in front of me accompanied by a loud noise from below. I then see a huge boa constrictor swimming past us and towards the edge of the lake, causing such a surge of water that it lifted our canoe. Feeling endangered, we rowed as fast as we could towards the center of the river. We then saw the head of the boa breach the water as it looked from left to right. Thank goodness that we were able to get away! I saw another boa on the Envira River, which flows into the Jurua. That time we had to get off the river entirely and run into the woods to escape.

Another time, after catching a large amount of fish, we stored what we didn't cook for dinner in a large basket in the canoe for the next day. With the canoe tied to the riverbank and the basket at my feet, I slept under the awning at the prow where I had my little "store." The canoe was heavily loaded and only sat about twenty centimeters from the water's edge. I then heard a loud crash and the sound of a body jumping out of my canoe and into the river. It turns out a crocodile was able to use its legs to get half his body into my canoe and ate the whole basket of fish. It is a miracle it did not eat my feet.

Yet another time, in a small canoe, called there a montariu, and which only barely holds three people, I arrived at the mouth of a lake and ran into a client rubber worker named Lima. The mouth of the lake was very small and was just about paved with the lurking heads of jacarés, a type of alligator that with just a flick of the tail can capsize a canoe. So I went instead by land through the middle of the forest until I reached the lake that way. One has to be very careful entering into the forest because it's very easy to get lost. Some people use a compass, others use the sun, but sometimes you cannot see the sun because the trees are so tall: the best way is to mark the trees with an axe or break off branches to mark your route so that you can find your way back.

On one particular eve of Yom Kippur, I was waiting in Teffé for Yuyu Levy's steamer to get a ride to the Jurua. I had with me two canoes, one of which I planned to tow for easy availability when resuming my trading, the other which I figured I would stow on board with all of the merchandise. But when Yuyu arrived in Teffé he inexplicably bypassed the commercial port deciding instead to moor at a smaller port further down the river, and all, it turned out, out of religious piety, to spend the holy day quietly and away from commerce. But he had hundreds of passengers, and schedule obligations, so one may consider the degree of sacrifice he was willing to make in the name of religion, what with all the scorn and religious prejudice he incurred as a result of his actions. Later that afternoon a tempest moved into Teffé and sank my waiting canoes. I had docked them by the shore of the lake and now I was hard pressed to find people to help rescue my merchandise from the river. Eventually I found two men and after considerable labor we managed to salvage my merchandise which we carried home wet and dripping. By then it was nearing the hour of Arbit (evening prayers) and so I barely had time to change from my wet things and make my way hurriedly to uncle Elías' house in time for prayers, along with all the local Jews from Teffé who had gathered there as well: and so I spent the entire day of Yom Kippur without even the opportunity to eat a single thing beforehand. When Yuyu's steamship finally arrived after Yom Kippur I was nonetheless unable to board seeing as my merchandise – the portion that wasn't ruined, that is -- was still drying in the sun. So I took the next steamer and just hoped for the best what with my merchandise in such a sorry state. These are just some of the risks and perils that accompany the life of a canoe trader in Brazil…

Now I want to tell you about something that happened to your father and I in Iquitos:
I was in Teffé and had to go to Pará to make purchases for my canoe business on the Jurua, and as my work was going to last six or seven months I decided first to go to Iquitos to see your father, who I would otherwise not see for eight or nine months taking into account the travel-time to Pará plus my months of work on the Jurua. When I got to Iquitos your father asked that I also get some goods for him. So I went to Pará and from there sent off my purchases to various friends living along the Jurua in order to have my things distributed strategically along the river. That way when I ran out, I could resupply easily. The items for my brother I stowed aboard a ship called the Araguay which happened to be making its maiden voyage to Iquitos, and which also happened to belong to a new company in Pará formed expressly to compete with the

famous Amazon River Trading Company.
I am including all of these details that you may better understand what happened next. Since I still had time before starting my Jurua canoe trades, I decided to come aboard the Araguay and go Iquitos myself so I could give your father a personal accounting of all I had done in Pará. (Interestingly, the Pará company would eventually name us their local agents in Iquitos.) Upon arriving, the commander of the ship, a man named Corría, hosted a luncheon attended by all the prominent local government and business figures, about forty or fifty all told, serving to inaugurate the company's brand new Iquitos destination.
In Iquitos there happened to live a young man named Benjamin Maya. He was originally from the province of Maranhao, Brazil, and was well-educated, friendly, jovial, and also of white skin. He had been naturalized Peruvian in order to qualify to become the "Captain of the Port" in Iquitos. But the Brazilians from Iquitos as well as those from other parts did not like him and even hated him for having given up his Brazilian citizenship. At any rate, this young man was highly offended at not having been invited to the luncheon and promised to take revenge on the captain as soon as given the opportunity.
The opportunity, it turns out, arose fairly quickly.
The red wine being served at the lunch was widely praised by the guests – it was indeed very good – and a certain highly-successful Brazilian businessman by the name of Manuel Nieves praised it so much that the captain decided to give him a fifty-liter barrel. The next day, the captain sent the barrel to Nieves' home and this is where the story gets good. Benjamin Maya, the Captain of the Port, seized the barrel as smuggled goods and threatened to hand it to customs when suddenly the ship captain, who had been tipped off about what was transpiring, shows up and tells Maya that he has never had to pay duties before on any food or liquor carried on his ship. (I don't personally know if the ship captain was in the right concerning unloaded items, even if these were ultimately intended to be consumed aboard a ship.) At any rate, the conversation gets heated and the next thing you know the ship captain grabs a hammer from Nieves' home and smashes the barrel spilling the wine all over the floor. Outraged at the disrespect towards public authority, Maya decides to have the captain arrested and calls over two police officers who take him off to jail.
When the news of the arrest hit the crew of the ship they began to get very agitated. My brother and I were also notified of the arrest and Moyses, who was fairly well known to the governor, immediately takes it upon himself to go and appeal to the governor to free the captain - but upon doing so, the governor starts yelling like a madman.
"Are you are threatening that the crew is planning to take the captain back by force!?"
Hearing all the yelling many people run over, among them the chief of police to whom the governor then says:
"Mr. Chief of Police, please arrest Mister Pinto, and if you hear a single gunshot coming from the town, shoot him immediately!"
Just then I turn up asking about my brother and they arrest me too. They take the two of us off to the same jail where the captain is being held and now the three of us sit around waiting to get shot.
Fortunately, a man named Mattos, highly-regarded within the Brazilian community -- polite, kind, intelligent -- made his way to the port and pleaded

with the first mate of the ship to sail some ways downriver and drop anchor to ensure no crew could come on land. Once this was accomplished and verified, the governor decided to let us go -- but not the ship-captain, who remained prisoner.
The whole thing lasted maybe three hours.
Now free, we were standing in the inner courtyard of the police station when the governor's son, "Nicanor," comes to me and says: "go on home, your brother will follow you in half an hour." I didn't want to go, but he and your father insisted, so I left. Your father was then taken to a room and there the son of the governor sent for a bottle of wine and filled two glasses, one for him, the other for your father; your father, however, for all of Nicanor's polite insisting, refused the drink and left.
Many in the town were outraged with the governor especially seeing as how your father was beloved in the town -- the townswomen had even nicknamed him "El Rey de Iquitos." An emergency session was held in chambers by the town leaders culminating in an arrest warrant for the governor who had meanwhile fled by canoe.
Sometime later, on July 28, Peru's day of independence, the son of the very same governor came to Moyses' house to invite him, on behalf of his father, to the governor's ball to celebrate the national holiday. I can still hear Moyses' answer:
"Thank you very much for the invitation, but you'd have to drag me."
To which Nicanor said:
"Mr. Pinto, put aside your grudge and come tonight -- my father would be very pleased."
Apropos of the above, please remember how at the start of this story I assured you that everything you were about to hear would be the truth, and that I wouldn't exaggerate, nor lie, nor invent. And it is so.

At that time Iquitos was a village in which everyone knew everyone and relationships were close. Today it is a small city. At any rate, immediately after these events I left for Teffé but upon arriving in Loreto, a Peruvian town near Tabatinga, and the site of the consul general's offices, the consul, after consulting the passenger manifest and noticing my name, asked me to stay and catch the next ship that I may tell him all that occurred in Iquitos. I accepted and remained with him a few days during which time I related all that took place that day in Iquitos which furthermore went directly into a report addressed to Princess Isabel who was at that time the Imperial Regent while her father Emperor Don Pedro II vacationed in Cannes. I have a copy of this report in my office here in Tangier.
The princess was married to the Count D'Eu, of the Orleans family, and the Brazilians hated her. The emperor, you see, was quite old and Brazilians feared that upon his death they would be governed by a foreigner; it was in fact this very thing that led to the proclamation of the republic.
The report to Isabel prompted by my information had the following effect: a few weeks later, a Brazilian warship arrived in Iquitos and proceeded to anchor some ways out from port when the Peruvian sanitary services and customs arrived to investigate: At which point the Brazilians yelled, "Get out of here! This Brazilian warship is not receiving visitors!" -- this, at any rate, is how your father told the story, since, as I explained earlier, I was not longer in Iquitos.

The captain of the ship and two officers in fancy uniforms then came off the ship and went straight to police headquarters to speak to the governor:
“We come as representatives of our government and request you hand over the captain of the Araguay”
To which the governor responded:
“The captain is provisionally freed but is subject to certain conditions as set out by a judge.”
-“Give us the Captain and you go deal with Judge!” responded the Brazilians.
The Captain was freed on the spot and returned to Manaos on the warship.
And so here I note how Peru, Brazil’s neighbor, lives very much in fear of its far bigger and more powerful neighbor.
A few months later an order came from Lima to remove the governor, the sub prefect, and several others from their jobs, including Benjamin Maya; what’s more, the Brazilian Consulate was officially moved from Loreto to Iquitos. A few years after that, the administrator of customs, whose name was Melena, and very close to your father, retired and moved to Lima. From there he wrote your father a very kind letter thanking him for providing a job for his son aboard our steamship the Preciada and told him all about the former governor, who was apparently very sick and financially ruined and languishing in a hospital in Lima. It seems the governor had told Melena that he deeply regretted his behavior towards your father and I, and also towards the captain of the Araguay, and that he had been surrounded by bad advisors who had badly misled him. This letter was sent here to Tangier and Jacques has kept it that you may have testimony of the kind of man your father was.

I will now put a stop to these remembrances; but I also want to note that while it is true enough that many people will start from nothing and eventually make their fortunes, they generally do it from home, surrounded by loved ones, and without having to endure the kind of dangers and difficulties that we endured all those years on our canoes. And so I am deeply grateful for a Divine Providence that protected us from so many perils and returned us to our family unharmed.

These days a lot of these memories are starting to slip away. But I do remember the day I went fishing in one of the many lakes that sprout from the Amazon and its tributaries. Fishing on a lake is much easier than fishing on rivers, what with their strong currents. One time I found a lake that was not too big and filled with hundreds of ducks that we easily caught with our hands and drowned in the water -- we got a lot, about thirty (we really did not need any more.)

Those who dare enter the forest to hunt, or to traverse some particular region, must be very careful with the large variety of fruit they are bound to come across. They should eat only that variety of fruit they see the monkeys eating as all other varieties tend to be harmful and poisonous.

The sounds in the forest are deafening: the monkeys scream, the birds make a terrible racket, and the jaguars add their own terrifying roar to this strange concert. Sometimes one sees dark clouds of birds flashing across the sky in groups of hundreds or thousands. The parakeet -- a small blue bird, smaller

than the dove, with scarlet head – the parrots, the Aracari -- all of these birds screeching together makes for a hellish cacophony. Also there is a very large species of parakeet that I've never seen, nor did I ever learn its name, but it sings in a deep, sonorous voice, and does so precisely every six hours, day and night, like clockwork.

After descending the Javari on a trip to Teffé, now on the Amazon itself, I decided to stop at a small dock and spend the night. After I tied up my canoe my two rowers went off to sleep on land and I stayed in the canoe. At dawn I was startled by a great crashing sound: it seems my canoe had become untied and had drifted all night with the current until finally colliding with a clump of trees on the bank. I climbed out and hurriedly tied my canoe to a tree that grew out of the shallow water when I heard a terrible noise coming from the woods. The noise, it turns out, was a herd of stampeding wild boar trampling everything in their way -- small trees that they smashed with a mere shove, whole branches, etc. Only the larger trees were spared. Fortunately, I was in the canoe so had nothing to fear. I ended up waiting until about ten in the morning when my two rowers showed up with the owner of the hut near the dock who had figured out that the canoe had become untied and drifted downstream. My two men got into my canoe with me and the other fellow went home in his montoria, a small one-man canoe.

November 12, 1945
Every now and then I remember some random event from my life on the Amazon. One time I was aboard a steamship entering into what I call the "grandson" of the Amazon, that is to say the Riosinho, which flows into the Jurua, which in turn flows into the Amazon. We arrived at the last navigable point on that river where a certain man, a Cearense (someone who hails from the province of Ceara), lived and ran a small rubber operation. We had brought him merchandise from Pará and planned to get rubber in exchange. We spent the night there, and the next morning the man offered the ship commander a twelve-year-old Indian girl to take home with him as his servant. Our ship left and began descending towards the Jurua and as we rounded the first bend in the river we were met with a hoard of naked Indians yelling and screaming from a small clearing on the bank armed with bows and arrows. Next thing, a cloud of arrows falls on our ship and by some miracle no one is hit. The ship continued briefly on its way but then stopped at the next beach to let the girl off so she could return to her family. The commander, fearing violent reprisals against the Cearense, thought it prudent to release the girl and not take her to Pará.
Although likely completely unimportant to any reader of this account, it occurs to me just
now that the name of the son of the governor mentioned earlier was Narciso, not Nicanor, as I incorrectly claimed. I add this correction for the sake of accuracy.

I never tire of thinking about the spectacular sight of the beach with all the turtles. It is easily the most amazing thing I have seen in my life. The beach was like a minefield filled with eggs, not a centimeter in between... I remember too how there were three separate "menchones," as were called the egg harvesting

sites, and how we only had time to extract the eggs from one and a half of them before the baby turtles started to pop out of the sand, and before the river surged, flooding the beach.

One major danger that I narrowly avoided presented itself when one of my rowers and I were on the bank dragging the canoe upriver with a rope; the other rower was meanwhile at the prow of the canoe pushing the bank away with a pole lest the canoe get caught or stuck. (This method was faster and easier than trying to row upstream.) As we're walking, we come suddenly upon a cow just ahead that had apparently wandered down from some small farm in the woods to drink from the river. The cow was sinking into the sand and soon disappeared entirely. Had we not seen the cow, we would have suffered the same fate since what the cow encountered was in fact quicksand, and no one gets out of that alive! The more one tries to get out, the more one sinks. On the index of my right hand I still have a callous from rowing the canoe.

Although this has no connection to these remembrances, I will tell you a funny story to make you laugh about a certain rascal named Jacinto Benatar, whom I knew. He was a know-it-all and knew more, as they say in Spanish, than "Lepe Lepijo y su hijo," and had settled in a village called Brebes, near Pará, where he had a wretched little shop. I don't know what he did wrong exactly, but the chief of the police, who was a lieutenant, sent a police officer to arrest him. When the police officer arrived, Jacinto rudely tells him:
"Tell your chief that neither you nor he can arrest me; there is a law in Brazil that states that an inferior cannot arrest a superior -- they have to be of the same rank or higher."
The police officer then says, "So why can't we arrest you?"
Jacinto answers, "you will see why."
"Jamila, bring the Ketuba!"
His wife shows up with a parchment and then he says to the police officer,
"Because of this."
The officer takes it in his hands, sees many letters and images all in gold, turns it over and over in his hands, and gives it back to Jacinto saying he does not understand what it says.
Jacinto then says, "No need for you to understand. This shows that I was named colonel in my land, so run and tell your boss and tell him to come and apologize to me."
The officer, not being of the lazy sort, doesn't waste a second and goes straight to the lieutenant: "We've put ourselves in a mess here!"
"What, you say he's a colonel?"
"Yes Sir, I held the certificate in my own hands."