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1000 words

The Mapinguari

by Matias Travieso-Diaz

Here comes the Mapinguari singing aww
"So Long Old Bean" by Devendra Banhart

For time beyond memory, a giant stood guard over the vast expanse of the Amazon River basin. His seven-foot body was covered by a thick, matted layer of greenish fur that had the texture of wild grass. He lacked a mouth, but had an eating orifice in the center of its torso, containing three rows of serrated teeth. His feet turned backwards, ending in claws that left groove marks on the ground. His rigid face was dominated by an enormous, single eye. As he lumbered about the wilderness, he occasionally uttered a deep roar that resonated like the sound of faraway thunder.

The primitive humans that inhabited the Amazonian jungle called him the *mapinguari*. When alerted of the cryptid's proximity by his overwhelming stench, they shied away lest they be caught in the beast's deadly grip. He, for the most part, ignored the two-legged apes and devoted all his attention to protecting the animals and majestic trees in his domain.

The *mapinguari*'s attitude towards humans changed when a new kind began to appear, a few centuries ago. These were mainly pale creatures who set out to raze the jungle. The cryptid then started going after the trappers, the loggers, the cowboys, the farmers, and others who committed acts of desecration against the land. When he corralled a human walking alone in the

forest, the *mapinguari* would seize the man's body and bring it to the gaping mouth in his midriff, from which emanated an unbearable odor of decaying flesh that was the last sensation the man would experience before being crushed by the monster's teeth.

As the number of his victims grew, fear rose in the hearts of those trying to tame the forest, and they reacted by organizing hunts to destroy the monster. The *mapinguari*, however, knew intimately each corner of the wilderness. Men would see him only when he chose to reveal himself, and this usually occurred when an opportunity for slaying one or more of them was available.

One day he found himself surrounded by an angry mob of settlers. They lunged at him with torches, and shot at him with firing sticks. The bullets, however, ricocheted off the dense fur of the *mapinguari* and the fire from the torches only left smoking patches on the cryptid's skin, releasing a fetid odor that nauseated the men. The *mapinguari* then charged back at the humans and slayed most of them, letting only a few escape to serve as a warning.

In a later encounter, the *mapinguari* came upon one of the leaders of the men who were bringing down the forest. The man was armed with a rifle and a bull whip, and frantically used both weapons in an attempt to arrest the monster's attack. However, as bullets whizzed by and the bull whip's sonic boom resounded, the cryptid advanced rapidly on the man, hoisting him in the air and crashing him on the ground, an action he repeated until the man's body had been reduced to a pulp. The *mapinguari* then bit off the head of the corpse and carried it away.

The *mapinguari* then went to the village where that band of settlers lived. He was carrying as a trophy the severed head of the man he had just killed. He intended to confront the villagers with the gruesome evidence of his revenge, but could not do so because the village was deserted, its inhabitants having fled in fear of the cryptid's attacks.

The *mapinguari* discovered, at the edge of the village, the hut of an old Indian woman who was too infirm to escape. She lay on a pallet, breathing laboriously, impending death showing on her features. For a moment, the *mapinguari* felt a touch of pity. However, he put feelings aside and addressed the woman in broken Tupi, the Indian's language:

[He]: "Hail, human."

[The woman]: "If you are Death, hurry up and finish your work. I suffered enough already and was left to die by all who knew me."

[He]: "I am not Death, but a living creature. I have come to let your kind see how I avenge myself of their crimes against this land."

[The woman]: "They are all gone."

[He]: "Yes, but they will pay for their arrogance with their lives. I shall continue to chase and slay everyone I find."

[The woman]: "Please do not take your vengeance on every one, deserving as they are of punishment. Just give them a warning. Maybe they will listen."

[He]: "There will be no more warnings. You humans are destroying the world and deserve to be exterminated."

[The woman]: "At least dump the head you are carrying on the village square. Maybe those who return will understand your message and act on it."

[He]: "I do not expect they will change, but I will do as you ask."

The Indian woman closed her eyes forever and the *mapinguari* walked away from her hut. He leveled every dwelling in the village save hers and left the severed head protruding from a sharpened stick, buried in the ground in the middle of the square.

The cryptid then retreated to the heart of the forest. He knew his mission might eventually have to come to an end, because he alone could not stem the tide of devastation that humans, like fire ants, were visiting on the Amazonian jungle.

Years have gone by, and a standstill of sorts has been reached. Development ground to a halt in the corner of the river basin patrolled by the *mapinguari*, but men continue their path of destruction everywhere else.

The cryptid now realizes that, other than protecting the sanctuary he has established, he cannot chase away the humans that continue to arrive. But he is not discouraged and feels that his fight must continue. If at the end all resistance fails, he will at least have the bitter satisfaction of knowing that, in destroying the greatest forest in the world, men are bringing utter ruin upon themselves.

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