

Roxanne Montoya Mahecha  
Seminar: Healing art and Theory  
Justus-Liebig-Universität Giessen

### **Macaw the gardener: The healing process behind the project**

While attending the seminar *Healing Art and Theory*, it resonated within me the need to grieve and manage our emotions regarding small losses during the pandemic. Because of the weight this circumstance has had in many people's lives, some may feel unjustified in complaining about little things (Parker-Pope, 2021). In my case, I really miss going to work or to the university, meeting my friends there, and even the 2 hour long bus trip I had to take in order to get there. Besides, both the situation regarding the pandemic and the difficult social context we are going through here in Colombia made me feel extremely anxious and frustrated. While doing some of the seminar's exercises, like the short writing exercise or the drawing exercise, I did not seem to find any relief, because I drew and wrote thinking about these overwhelming struggles.

That is why, as a creative project, I decided to focus on a small problem and tried to make something a little bit more light hearted out of it. I wrote and illustrated a short story meant for children called "Macaw the gardener". It is a quite simple story: Macaw, a very talented and passionate gardener, is forced to leave her job and stay home because of an epidemic taking place in the Amazon rainforest. Since many of her bird friends actually go to work —because they work in jobs such as hospitals, security or food gathering—, she starts to feel useless and flustered, and decides to go and help her friends with their various jobs. We then see her try and fail again and again, until she realizes that it is OK to keep doing a "not as important job", along as she does her best, even if she has to adapt to new conditions, it will make her and the others happy.

Although it is a very simple story (or maybe *because* it is a very simple story), I really enjoyed making it; I did not get that overwhelming feeling I got from writing directly about the current context. I also think Macaw's situation is something other people might relate to: for example, children who are unable to go to school or meet their friends and see that other people actually get to go out. For me, it was a very helpful experience to make this book, and I hope it will give those who read it a moment of joy as well.

**References:**

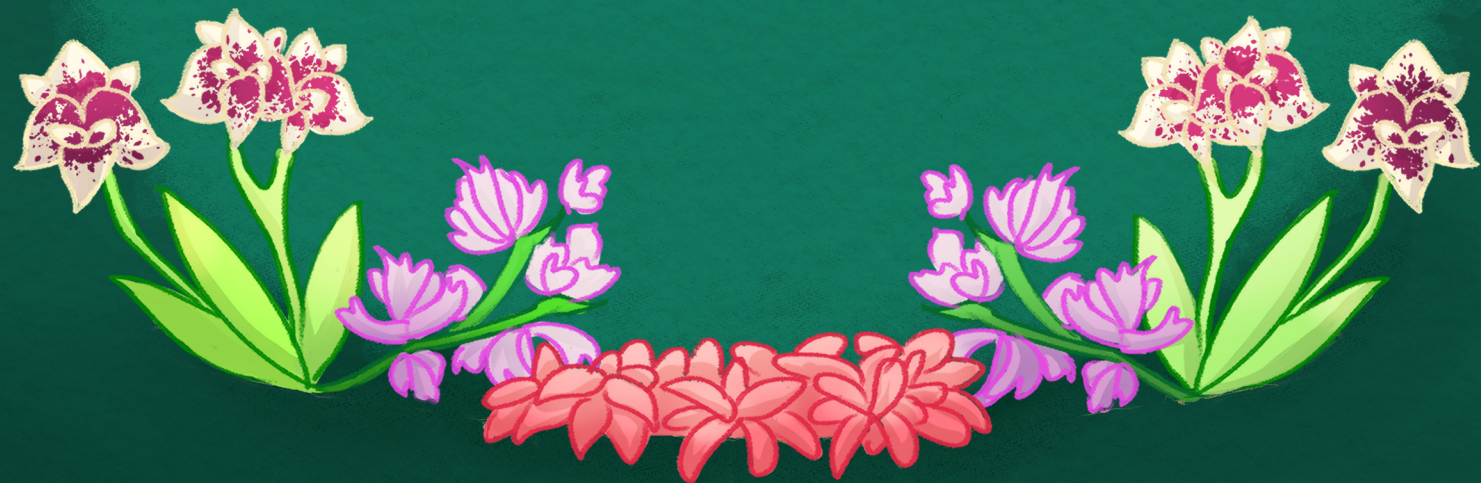
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# Macaw The Gardener

Macaw, a very talented gardener from the Amazon rainforest, is forced to stay home and becomes unable to take care of her garden anymore.

Follow Macaw in her journey on finding a new passion.




# Macaw the Gardener



Written and illustrated by

Roxanne MM





Once upon a time, Macaw lived in the tropical rainforest. Everyday she left home early and flew to the other side of the rainforest. There was her garden and she took care of it all day long. It was big and beautiful, and so every bird went there to get some rest.

“The fruits of your garden are very delicious!”, her friend Toucan said.

“Your ferns are so pretty!”, her friend Owl said.

“And your flowers are so gorgeous!”, her friend Hummingbird said.

Macaw, happy and proud, went home to rest.







But, one day, the birds started to get sick. They all were told to stay at home so they wouldn't spread the disease. All, except those who worked harvesting food, ensuring the safety of other birds or taking care of the ill.

“I work so hard in my garden, why is my job less important than everyone else’s?”, Macaw thought with anger.







At first, against her will, she stayed home. But then, as she felt lonely, sad and bored, she got an idea.

“If I can not work in my garden, I may help the other birds. After all, how hard can it be?”, Macaw thought. “I will tell Toucan! He works harvesting food, so I am sure I will be able to help him choose the most delicious fruits”.







And then, Macaw went out to help her friend Toucan.

“Hello Macaw! Thank you very much for coming to help me”, Toucan said.

“You're welcome, how can I help?”, she asked with excitement.

“I need you to fill this basket with fruits before noon”, he said.

“Of course”, she said and started collecting the fruit.







Macaw picked up one, two, three fruits. In one hour she had picked up around a dozen. “But, no matter how I look at them, these are not as beautiful as the ones from my garden”, she thought. Then, she peeled them, cut them and served a fruit cocktail in a coconut shell. And, because it looked so tasty, and because the weather was so hot, she drank it.

When Toucan arrived, he exclaimed “Hey Macaw! How is the work doing?”

But then he realized that Macaw did not have a single fruit in the basket.

“Maybe this job is not for you” said Toucan. “You can go and talk to Owl, she told me she needed some help”.

Macaw thanked him, apologized and went to meet Owl.







“Maybe harvesting food was not the best of ideas, but I am sure I will be able to help Owl”, thought Macaw with optimism.

“Good afternoon, Macaw”, said Owl gently.

“Good afternoon, Owl”, replied Macaw.

“Tonight we have to guard the rainforest, to ensure we are safe against predators. You just have to fly, watch around and shout if something bad happens”, said Owl.

“I will start right now!”, said Macaw.







Then, Macaw flew off, but, when it got dark, she realized she could not see anything! After all, she always went out during the day, while her friend Owl went out during the night.

She did her best to watch over the rainforest, but, aw! She crashed against a tree. Since she was hurt, she screamed as loud as she could.

Scared, Owl went towards Macaw. She found her crying on the ground. Owl helped her to get up and told her kindly “Thank you very much for helping me, but maybe this job is not for you. I heard Hummingbird needs some help, maybe you could give him a hand”.

Macaw thanked her, apologized and went to meet Hummingbird.







“Maybe it has not worked so far, but I am sure I will be helpful to Hummingbird”, Macaw thought.

“Hi Macaw!” Hummingbird said excitedly. “Here in the bird’s hospital we need a lot of help, can you lend me a hand?”

“Gladly”, Macaw said, “what do I have to do?”.

“I need you to look out for birds with small injuries, while I take care of the ill”, Hummingbird said and immediately flew off before Macaw could say anything else.







Right away a small parrot arrived with his dad.

“He was flying and fell down. I think he hurt his wing”, Mr. Parrot said worriedly.

“Let 's see!” Macaw said. But, when she saw the injury on the tiny parrot’s wing, she saw some blood and fainted. When she came to, the two parrots were taking care of her while Hummingbird brought a first aid kit.

“We were so worried about you!” Hummingbird exclaimed. “Thank you for trying, but I do not think you will be able to work here”, he said sadly.







“But then, what should I do?” Macaw cried. “I can not help to harvest, nor to watch over the rainforest, nor help the ill...I am useless” she said bitterly. “I cannot even take care of my garden now”.

“Excuse me, are you the gardener macaw?” Asked the oldest of the parrots.

“Yes, that's me”, she replied. “Why?”

“I am a great fan of your work! I promised my son to bring him to taste the most delicious fruits, see the biggest ferns and smell the most beautiful flowers of the rainforest. But, when we arrived, the disease had spread and we had to remain home. We stayed expecting you to open your garden again”.

Then, Macaw remembered how happy and proud she felt about her garden.





So then, Macaw came back home and started to grow some plants inside. It was not the same as her huge garden at the other side of the rainforest, but, even if small, in her house she could do what she loved and what she was really good at. She did not just learn to value her own work better, but also her friend's. "Who would say it was so hard doing what they do", she thought gladly, while she watered her plants.

