

KALEIDOSCOPIK STORYTELLING

By Heloisa Prieto

How about introducing a proper courtship sequence?"

I read the suggestion made by my Irish literary agent's team and realized I would have to add a couple of lines to the dialogue between Thomas, the young musician and Marlui, a Guarani young woman with an extraordinary perception.

As the famous quote by French author, Gustave Flaubert, *I am Madame Bovary* (*Madame Bovary c'est moi*) Marlui also carried my DNA and I had never been a "dinner date" type of girl.

Inspired by some Guarani friends of mine, Marlui was meant to be a xaman, but she chose to go to law school in order to fight for her people's rights. The narrative also places a rich and famous, eighteen year old musician struggling with the loss of both his parents. His only companions are inexplicable musical creatures that he can see but others can't.

His music is his bridge to the world, and his favorite form of connection. Besides playing for crowded houses in sophisticated venues, Thomas enjoys busking from time to time.

When Marlui sees Thomas playing his guitar near a fountain, she realizes his music has an enchanting quality very much like her grandpa's sound healing songs. Yet, she sees him being lured to dr. Alonso who is known to be the leader of a controversial cult. For the first time in her life, Marlui will have to call upon her unique sensitivity in order to rescue the musician from a life and death situation.

Marlui does not feature a "proper", "regular" dinner date scene, I felt I needed to convey her spontaneous and charming approach as a lover. During my long years of friendship and literary partnership with Brazilian indigenous people, I always enjoyed their ironic bluntness, so to speak, and learned so much from having to take a step back and look upon "civilized" manners with a critical eye. Why can't we see that trees are sacred? Why can't we share space with animals, birds and other beings? Why can't we listen to the musical river waters and have insights?

Most of all, I enjoyed their affectionate silences, laughter and resilience. Marlui is my homage to young women such as Kerexu, the mother of three lovely girls, a leader in her community, and her mother, one of the best storytellers I have ever met. We would sit in the meadow, several kids playing around us, listening to the birds, making small talk and cracking jokes. Slowly, as I adapted to their easygoing ways, city noises vanished from my mind and I could always cross my own secret gate to inner peace.

Amidst Guarani friends, I noticed that young couples would meet and swim together, walk into the woods or play and chant at the prayer house as a way to get to know each other. Having spent long periods of time in the countryside, I certainly could relate to their spontaneous “courtship” and try to convey its charm, but I also made it a point of inserting some of Thomas' surprise at Marlui's openness, in the skin of an urban, contemporary young man.

Popygua, the xaman, repeats sentences I heard from actual Guarani healers and several, insightful perceptions by Thomas were inspired by true experiences of mine while taking part in healing ceremonies.

Yet, the hardest challenge was to imprint Guarani's deeply symbolic perception of life, full of poetic metaphors, into a narrative structure, hence the creation of Thomas's journal. The choice of conveying the plot through the eyes of different narrators was my attempt to create a kaleidoscope in which each character can contribute with their own internal monologues.

I started writing this book in 2019, when my dear friend Estas Tonne, an exceptionally gifted musician came to Brazil. He played his guitar in the Prayer house and it was such a memorable moment I tried to convey some of its magic in a chapter entitled “Five Strings”.

Having his songs as a daily soundtrack, I was so grateful I could rely on his views and attentive readership as I developed Thomas's journey of self musical discovery. It has always been hard for me to leave the realm of a narrative, so, please, consider this book as an invitation for co-creation, to share music and storytelling as a never ending path.

The Musician, written by Heloisa Prieto, prefaced by Estás Tonne.

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Dr. Heloisa Prieto is one of Brazil's most celebrated children and YA authors. She has sold over two million books in her native country. Her Mano series of YA novels inspired the Time Warner movie The Best Things in the World. She recently published 1,002 Ghosts, and her book Viajantes do Vento was selected for the PNLD Public Book-Purchasing Programme, the biggest of its kind in the world. She has spent a lifetime researching myths and legends—both ancient and modern—and organizing and curating collections of cross-cultural interest. She has created and organized numerous creative writing workshops for children, teenagers, and adults. Heloisa also has a PhD in French literature (University of São Paulo) and a master's degree in semiotics (Catholic University of São Paulo).