Remaema walked lazily through the rainforest towards the river, sucking her favourite wild berries. At the water’s edge she washed her sticky hands. The muddy water hurried past her to join the world’s largest river – the Amazon.

Remaema heard a noise. It sounded like an insect close to her ear, but it came from the distant river bank. When the buzzing stopped, the tree-tops moved, and one of the tallest trees fell.

She hurried home and told her mother what she had seen.

“Child, it is the nabè. You heard the machine they use to cut trees.”

Remaema nodded. The nabè were white people – strangers. They had come to take away her forest.
As the sun set, Remaema’s uncle Moawa returned to the yano – the round house which all the families shared. He proudly carried a new machete, and wore a bright red T-shirt.

Remaema’s father asked where he got such precious things.

“From the nabe,” he replied.

“Brother, you are helping the nabe, who are cutting down our trees?”
“These people are powerful...” Moawa replied angrily. “They have guns. They can kill us before we get close enough to hit them with an arrow. If we give them what they want, they will reward us. If we don’t help them, they will take it anyway.”

Then everyone spoke at once and started arguing.
“STOP!”

Her grandfather’s shout made Remaema jump. Everyone went quiet. “I have travelled far, and I have seen the nabē cutting down trees, destroying our world. If we help them, we make our own ruin.”

Moawa defended himself. “The forest will return: we make clearings, too, for growing bananas and casava. When we move on, trees soon cover our gardens…”
“No!” The old man stopped him. “We make small clearings. But when the nabē come, they take away every tree. When all the trees have gone, the animals die. It is the animals that spread the seeds of the trees. No animals, no forest. No forest, no food. Then we will all starve.”
Remaema’s grandfather was right. To grow their plants, the farmers cut down trees and set fire to the forest. They soon moved on, but the trees did not grow back. The fires scared away the forest animals. Peccaries used to be common once, but after the nabē came, hunters no longer caught these tasty forest pigs. Many fruit trees had vanished, too. Finding enough food took much longer. Sometimes there was nothing at all.

The nabē needed the help of guides such as Moawa. They offered tools, clothes and money in exchange. But afterwards, the farmers only paid the guides half of what they had promised. Villagers tried to hunt down the nabē who had cheated them, but the farmers kept them away with their guns.