

Mario



This is Mario (MAH dee oh). He is a Belizean boy. He is four years old. His skin is brown and his hair is black. His dark eyes sparkle, and his bare feet run quickly across the dusty yard.



He lives in a wooden house with a steep roof of thatch. When Mario lies on his little wooden bed at night he looks up at the high woven roof over his head

and thinks about God. His daddy says God lives in heaven far above the thatch roof. Heaven is higher than the moon and the stars that twinkle in the black night sky. But God can look right through the thick leaves on the roof and see Mario in his little bed.

Mario listens to the insects buzzing in the jungle outside. A night bird whistles a shrill *aye-ah*. The village dogs bark. A bicycle squeaks by on the road. But Mario is not afraid of the insects or the bird or the dogs or the person on the bicycle. He is safe inside his house with his daddy and mother, his big brother, Juan, and his sister, Camilla. God is up there in the big sky with the stars and the moon, watching over him. Mario closes his eyes and goes to sleep.

Mario's Corn

Mario's daddy has a cornfield. Every day he walks through the jungle to his cornfield. He carries a big, sharp machete to chop the weeds in the cornfield.

When the corn is nearly ripe, the wild peccaries (pigs) come. They come at night. They smash down the cornstalks and eat the ears of corn. Daddy hunts the peccaries with his gun.

One night he kills a peccary and carries it home. Mother cooks the peccary meat in her big pot. She pats corn masa (dough) into neat round tortillas, then places them to bake on the large, flat, round piece of metal, called a comal. When the hot tortillas are done on one side she picks them up with her fingers and flips them over to bake on the other side. Sometimes Mario tries to flip tortillas, but he always burns his fingers. He cannot make tortillas, but he can eat them.

Mario dips his corn tortillas into his bowl of peccary caldo (soup). M-m-m-m. It tastes good.



Mario has a cornfield too. Six kernels of corn drop into the soft ground behind Mother's kitchen. Six corn plants poke their green leaves up through the dirt.

"This is my corn," says Mario. "I must put water on it." He gets an old cup and fills it with water. He carries the water to his corn and pours it over the little green