

## **The Lost Box**

The sun had been warm all day but now a cool breeze was coming across the lagoon and soon it would be time for dinner. Paula had played hide and seek with her sisters for hours and was now happy to relax by the edge of the water. As she sat there, feeling happy with her day, Paula noticed a man strolling along the water's edge. She had seen him there quite often, walking along with his girlfriend and holding her hand. They always seemed so happy to be together and they laughed a lot as they skipped stones on the water's surface. Today he was walking alone by the water. Paula watched as the man sat on a large rock and looked out over the water. He did not seem unhappy to be there all by himself; in fact, he had a smile on his face. Then he reached deep into his pocket and took out a small box. He opened the box and took out something very beautiful - it shined and sparkled in the sunlight. The man was obviously very pleased with the shiny object because he kept taking it out of the box, looking at it, and then putting it back in the box again. Every now and then he would look at his watch and smile.

After a while, the man stood up and began walking along the water's edge again. He walked slowly along, still taking the box out of



his pocket, looking at it and then putting it back again. Paula thought this was rather strange behavior; she had never seen anyone do this before. He looked at his watch again and then suddenly began hurrying along the path. He didn't see the rocks in his path and he tripped over them and nearly fell down. His jacket caught on an old thorny bush and the little box fell out of his pocket and rolled down the bank and went into the water. He didn't notice that the box had fallen out of his pocket but continued walking faster and faster. Further along on the path stood his girlfriend waiting for him. They greeted each other with a hug

and then walked along, arm in arm, by the water's edge. Suddenly, the man pulled his girlfriend over to a big rock and asked her to sit down. Then he got down on his knees right there in the dirt. Paula couldn't believe her eyes! She had never seen him acting so strangely before. With a big grin on his face, he reached deep into his pocket. There was nothing there! He checked this pocket and that pocket, trying to find the box. It was nowhere to be found. "Where can it be? Where can it possibly be?", cried out the man to no one in particular. Paula felt sorry for him because he was so upset. "Where can what be?", asked his girlfriend. She did not know about the little box. "My surprise present for you!", answered the man. With that, he jumped up off the ground and started walking along the path again, looking everywhere for the box. When he came to the place where the box had fallen out of his pocket, he didn't see it because it was now several inches under the water and he didn't look in the water. Paula watched him walk right past the box. "He will never find it unless he looks into the water, and he won't do that because he doesn't know that the box rolled there", thought Paula. She watched as the man looked up and down the path for the box, back and forth he walked. The beautiful girl followed him with a sad look on her face. "I have to help him find the box", thought Paula. " I can show him where it fell into the water!"

With that, Paula flew towards the man and his girlfriend and landed in the water just offshore. They both saw Paula but did not understand that she was there to help, so they walked on past her and kept looking. "I have to find a way to make them come over here", thought Paula. She flapped her wings and made a lot of noise at the water's edge. "Surely this will make them come here and look at me, and then they will see the box just under the water", thought Paula. But the young couple did not pay any attention to her. "Maybe if I screech a few times, they will think something is wrong and come to the water's edge", reasoned Paula. So she let out several very loud screeches. "Screeeeech!" screamed Paula, but the young couple thought she was playing and did not come over to her. "Oh my! Oh my! What can I do to get them to look into the water?" cried Paula, who was feeling sad that her bill was too big for her to pick up the small box in such shallow water. Suddenly Paula noticed a large turtle swimming leisurely in the lagoon. "Maybe that turtle will help me," thought Paula, as she swam over to him. "Mr. Turtle, would you be kind enough to help out with a big problem?" asked Paula. "Of course," answered Mr. Turtle, "as long as you realize that I am not very fast and it may take some time." "Oh dear," thought Paula, "we don't have much time." But the turtle was eager to help, so Paula explained the problem to him. "We need the young couple over there to come back

to the water's edge after you have pushed the little box up out of the water. Do you think you can do it?" asked Paula. "I will do my very best," answered the turtle, who was already starting to swim over to the little box. By now the young couple was starting to walk back along the path, getting closer to Paula and Mr. Turtle. "Hurry, please," cried Paula, as the turtle very slowly started pushing the box along the bottom of the water, moving it closer to the bank. Slowly, slowly



he pushed the box toward the shore. Quickly, quickly walked the young couple coming back along the path. "I must slow them down," thought Paula, as she watched them hurrying along. With a couple of hops on the water, Paula took flight and flew above the path, then landed right in front of them. When they tried to walk around her, she moved in front of them. They moved right and she moved right ...

they moved left and she moved left. Back and forth they went from one side of the path to the other, with Paula blocking them wherever they went. Finally, Mr. Turtle called out with great joy, "The box is on the path. I did it! I did it!" With this happy news, Paula waddled over to the side of the path and let the young couple pass. Closer and closer they got to where Mr. Turtle had the box waiting for them. "My little box!" cried out the man with great excitement, as he came to the spot where the turtle had pushed the box. He picked it up and did a little dance right there along the water's edge. When he had calmed down, he asked his girlfriend to sit down on a nearby rock. Then he knelt down in the dirt again and opened the box. He took out the very shiny object and took his girlfriend's hand in his. He then placed a beautiful engagement ring on her finger and asked her to marry him. Paula knew the girl had said yes because she jumped up quickly and gave the man a very big hug. The excitement was almost too much for Paula, who flew around and around in circles above them. "Screeeech! Screeeech!" Mr. Turtle had gone back into the water and was feeling very pleased with himself for getting the box on the path in time.

Finally the man and his girlfriend walked off together holding hands, just like they had done so many times before. "What a great day", thought Paula, as she flew home and told her family all about it.