



The Forgetful Cat

Toco the toucan heard the sound first. It was a high pitched and very loud wail. Was someone in danger? The wail pierced the air again. It made Toco's feathers prickle. The sound came from somewhere within the rainforest, but where exactly? Toco flew through a thick clump of trees and came to a clearing.

Before Toco had a chance to investigate further, a different sound filled the air. Heavy running footsteps drew near. Ranger Tabatha burst into the clearing. Blink the frog, Snapper the crocodile and Bronte the butterfly followed closely on her heels.

'Is someone injured?' cried Tabatha. 'We heard a terrible noise.'

'I heard it too,' said Toco. 'Whoever it is, they're close by.'

Everyone stood still and listened. The wail came again. This time they could also make out some words. 'Aarr! Sink me!' said a gruff voice. 'I do believe I've knocked my noggin.'

'Where are you?' called Ranger Tabatha. 'We've come to help you.'

'Ahoy! Over here, Lass. Follow my voice.'

Everyone followed Ranger Tabatha. They all stopped and stared, mouths open.

'Oh dear!' said Ranger Tabatha.

'Goodness gracious!' said Toco.

'Strike me pink!' said Snapper.

'Ohhh,' chorused Blink and Bronte.

The oddest looking cat they'd ever seen sat under the fern. A bump, almost the size of a pinecone, bulged from the side of his head. He had a shaggy face with long black whiskers. A gold ring pierced one ear, and a patch covered one eye. The creature clutched his head and moaned, 'Arrr, it hurts. My poor noggin. I tripped and bumped my head on this here stone.' He pointed towards a rough edged rock.

Tabatha reached into her backpack, pulled out a bandage and knelt down beside the cat. 'Who are you?' she asked as she gently wrapped the bandage around the creature's head.

'I'm...I'm...' The cat wrinkled his brow, and let another cry, 'Meeooowww! I don't even know my own name!'

'He's lost his memory,' said Toco.

'Shiver-me-timbers! I think that's true,' said the cat. He wiped a tear from his eye.



'Can you help me remember who I am?'

'We'll help you,' said Ranger Tabatha. 'Perhaps we can find clues to help you remember.'

'Clues? What clues?' said the cat.

Toco looked closely at the feline. 'Your clothes are a clue'. Tabatha and the others all nodded their heads in agreement.

Everyone could see that the cat wore clothes that were very different to their own. Not only did he wear an earring and an eye-patch, he also wore black boots, a puffy white shirt and a black hat which rested jauntily between his ears.

'Aye, me hearties,' said the cat. 'That's a good clue, but I still can't remember.' Everyone became silent, as they stared at the cat and pondered about another clue.

'Aarr!' said the cat. 'It's no good. No good at all. I'll never remember my name.' His head drooped as he let out another, 'Aarr!', 'There's another clue,' said Blink. 'The way you talk. You talk differently to us.'

'Aye, noticed that I did. You must be a group of land-lubbers!'

'What's a land-lubber?' asked Bronte as she flitted around the cat.

'Why, it's a person who loves the land, of course,' said the cat. 'That's not the life for me. Give me wooden decks and fresh salty air as I sail-ho across the sea!'

'I think you're starting to remember,' said Snapper.

'By the sound of it, you must spend a lot of time sailing across the ocean,' said Bronte. 'But you're certainly lost if you do. The seaside is far away from our rainforest.'

The cat sighed, and then sighed once more. He folded his front paws and let out a soft, 'Aarr!'

Toco noticed the pocket of the cat's puffy shirt was rather lumpy. 'I think you have another clue inside your pocket.'

The cat reached a paw inside his pocket and withdrew a folded document. It was brown and raggedy around the edges. Everyone watched with curious eyes as he unfolded the paper. What would it show?

The cat eyed the piece of paper. With a hooked claw he pointed to something on the document. He mouthed some words silently to himself as his one good eye examined the page.

'Yo ho ho!' he exclaimed as he jumped to his feet. The cat removed his hat with a flourish and bowed before the curious group. 'Captain Sardine Claw,' he announced.



'A pleasure to make your acquaintance'. A grin the size of a watermelon covered his face. 'I remember my name! The map jiggled my memory!'

The cat thrust the document before the on looking faces. It was indeed a map. There was a distant coastline and a picture of a ship in port. A line of red ink trailed from the ship, across the land until it reached the edge of some trees. A gigantic 'X' marked the end of the red line.

Ranger Tabatha, Toco, Blink, Snapper and Bronte all gasped. 'You're a pirate' they cried. 'And that's you're treasure map!'

'Aye, me Hearties. Your words are true.'

'Can we help search for your treasure?' Toco asked.

'Aye!' said Ranger Tabatha. 'Aye!' echoed Blink, Snapper and Bronte.

'Alas, me Maties, it's not possible.' Captain Claw paused and looked down at the ground. His whiskers quivered and the inside of his ears began to turn bright pink. 'I've just remembered something else. This Captain hasn't been too clever,' he finally said.

'Why?' asked Ranger Tabatha. 'I followed the wrong map. Captain Claw sailed his ship to the wrong country. The treasure marked on this map is in a different rainforest in a different land.'

'Oh,' said Toco. Everyone looked disappointed, including the pirate.

Captain Claw brightened. 'But, you could do this old pirate a favour,' he said. 'You could walk with me to the edge of your rainforest, and point me in the right direction so I can cross the land and find my ship.'

Ranger Tabatha nodded her head. 'We'd love to help you. After all, it's not every day we meet a pirate.'

Toco smiled. 'And perhaps, on the way, you can teach us to talk like a pirate. That would be fun.'

A gleam appeared in Captain Claw's one good eye. He bowed before his helpers and cried, 'Anchors away, land-lubbers! Let's embark on a new adventure.'