

# THE NECKLACE

**On a very hot, tropical morning about twenty million years** before this present day, a hungry beetle, minding its own business, scuttled up a courbaril tree. The beetle, having a brain the size of a punctuation mark in a book, unknowingly scuttled into oozing, sticky sap. *Splurchh.*

The beetle's scuttling days were cut short. Just. Like. That.

Meanwhile, the sap continued to ooze. It flowed down, down, down the tree, carrying off the beetle to wet soil. Soon, a freshwater current found the sappy beetle and swept it away to a mangrove swamp. There, it sank deep into the muck. *Thwurrp. Blunnck. Blip.* And there it stayed for millions of years, hardening into amber.

That is, until a spring day in 1959, when Jorge Ortiz, barefoot and shirtless, chiseled the chunk of amber out of layers of lignite rock 130 feet below the ground. He held the

rock in his hand and licked it. Yes, licked it, which revealed the golden amber and the beetle inside. Incidentally, the flavor was not especially good, but Jorge had tasted worse. His sister's sancocho, for one thing. Like eating boiled feet. But times were hard, and Jorge would eat a wheelbarrow full of rock if he could make a few pesos doing it.

Jorge sold the amber to the village jeweler, Leandro Gil. Leandro spent months fashioning it into a necklace. The beetle inside was as close to a pet as Leandro ever had, and as he worked on the necklace late into the night, he told the beetle his dreams, his fears, and all the secret things he kept close to his heart.

Leandro eventually sold the necklace to an American tourist, Finnigan Drake, who gave it to his daughter, Margorie. Margorie took one look at the necklace, shouted "Pineapple!" and promptly shoved it into her mouth before her father could stop her. Pineapple was Margorie's favorite food and favorite word. (Margorie was one and a half.)

Worried that keeping the pineapple-looking necklace might result in little Margorie not seeing age two, Margorie's parents gave the necklace to their neighbor, Janice Freeman. Janice was petrified of two things: bugs and rudeness. So she accepted the necklace, but only to be polite.

Janice couldn't be rid of the necklace fast enough. She gave it to her mother, Dinah, that same day. Unlike Janice, Dinah wasn't petrified of anything, and she wore the necklace while

## ANATOMY OF LOST THINGS

skydiving and refereeing pro wrestling matches. To prove that she wasn't even afraid of death, she lived to be 107. When she died, all of her belongings that Janice didn't want (which was most of them) were sold at a garage sale.

Ezra Platz, a garage sale fanatic, offered Janice twenty dollars for the amber necklace, which she accepted immediately and with an abundance of enthusiasm. Ezra gave the necklace to his niece Myra when she graduated from art school. She always liked the color yellow. And she had a thing for bugs. She drew pictures of them. Bugs had it easy, was how Myra saw things. Bugs led simple lives and didn't ponder life's big questions, such as "Who am I?" and "What am I supposed to do?"

Bugs, thought Myra, didn't feel lost like she sometimes felt.

Myra kept the necklace for several years and then passed it on to its present-day owner, her daughter, whose name was Tildy Gubbers.