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Life is Surprising sample  
NOT FOR SALE

## **LIFE IS SURPRISING**

Level 1 - A1/A2 Starter (1) Graded Reader from I Talk You Talk Press

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## Introduction

This is a collection of short stories for learners of English.

Story 1: The Earring

Story 2: The Dog and the Carpet

Story 3: The Visitor

Story 4: The Castle

Story 5: The Man in the Forest

## Story 1: The Earring

Carlos is a taxi driver. He doesn't have much money, so he doesn't own a taxi. Carlos is a driver for a big taxi company. The company owns the taxis. Every day, Carlos drives a different taxi.

Carlos is a very handsome man. Everyone thinks he is very good looking.

Sometimes, women passengers in his taxi say, "What time do you finish work? We are having a party tonight. Would you like to come?"

Carlos gets many invitations for dates from women but he always says 'no'.

Why does he say 'no'? Carlos says 'no' because he is in love.

He loves Maria. He has never spoken to Maria. He can't speak to her. Her full name is Maria Benedita Gregória. Carlos knows her name because it is on the label next to her picture. You see, Carlos is in love with a picture of Maria. Maria's picture is in the city art gallery.

Every day Carlos walks to the taxi company. He works from 6:00am to 3:00pm. But Carlos always arrives at work at 5:00am. He arrives early to clean his taxi. The company has a rule. After work, all taxi drivers have to clean the taxi they drove. But many drivers don't clean them. Sometimes the taxi Carlos has to drive is dirty. Carlos doesn't like that. So he cleans the taxi before he starts work.

When Carlos finishes work, he goes to the art gallery. He likes art. But especially he likes the painting of Maria Benedita Gregória. He stands in front of the painting and looks at it for a long time.

He knows everything about the painting. He bought a catalogue from the art gallery. It has a small photograph of the picture in it. He keeps the catalogue next to his bed. The woman in the picture is very beautiful and young. She is wearing a white satin dress. She has beautiful jewellery - diamonds and emeralds. She is looking out of the picture.

Carlos thinks she is looking at him. Carlos dreams that she is still alive. He dreams that she is his girlfriend. It is very sad because Maria Benedita Gregória died in 1929.

Carlos knows it is crazy. He never tells anyone about his secret love. But he knows he will never love another woman. Sometimes, if he is alone in the art gallery, he talks to Maria. He thinks that sometimes she answers him.

One morning, Carlos arrives at work as usual at 5:00am.

“Good morning,” he says to the man in the taxi office. “Which car will I drive today?”

“Good morning, Carlos,” answers the man in the office. “Number 505 for you today. I am sorry. Benny drove it last night. It is very dirty. That man is a pig. He never cleans his taxi.”

“That’s OK,” says Carlos. “I have time. I will clean it.”

Carlos cleans the outside of the taxi first. Then he starts to clean the inside. Benny was eating in the taxi last night. On the floor next to the driver’s seat there are empty cans and an empty pizza box. The back of the taxi is not so dirty but Carlos cleans that too. Then he sees something shiny. It is on the floor next to the back seat. He picks it up. It is an earring. Carlos looks at it. He thinks, *I know this earring! I have seen this earring before. Maybe I saw a passenger wearing it.*

The taxi company has a rule. If a driver finds anything in the taxi, he has to give it to the man in the office. Then, if a passenger calls and says, “I left my wallet in one of your taxis” or, “I left my coat in the taxi,” the man in the office can say, “I have it here,” or “I’m sorry, we didn’t find it.”

But Carlos doesn’t want to give the earring to the man in the office. He puts the earring in his pocket. Carlos thinks he has seen the earring before. He wants to think about it.

When Carlos finishes work, he takes the taxi back to the company. Then he takes a bus to his apartment. He makes a sandwich and a cup of coffee. He sits down at the table in his small kitchen. He takes the earring from his pocket and looks at it.

*Where have I seen this earring?* he thinks. He holds the earring in his hand. He thinks for a long time. Then he remembers!

-----END OF SAMPLE-----