

Oscar Needs a Library Card

by Karen Slpps

"Hello Mrs. Stone!" said Gabby.

"Hello Gabby. Well, these are some great books you've picked out today. said Mrs. Stone. You must be the school library's biggest fan!"

"Yes Ma'am", said Gabby.

"I see here you have an overdue book. Twenty cents is due today for "The Secret Life of Bilbert Holmes".

"\$0.20? Are you sure?" asked gabby. "I turned that in last Friday!"

"Well today is Tuesday my dear, and we don't have it in the return bin. Are you sure you turned it in? Maybe you meant to but you forgot. Ill tell you what. If you bring it in tomorrow, I will forgive today's 10 cents, but you'll still owe me the twenty."

"Thank you Mrs. Stone. I'll look for the book tonight."

That night Gabby look all over for the book. She looked on her bookshelf, in her bag, in her sock drawer and even in the freezer. She looked and looked and looked, but the book was nowhere to be found! *I know i turned it in!* thought Gabby. *Where could it have gone?*

The next day, Gabby had another book to return. She opened up the drawer to slide her book in and peeked inside. Nothing odd. *Okay, in you go!* She ran off to class.

After lunch, Gabby got a pass to go to the library to see Mrs. Stone. " Mrs. Stone, I couldn't find the book. Are you sure it wasn't turned in? What about the book I turned in today. Did you get that one?" asked Gabby.

"Why Gabby, there were no books turned in today. I checked just before lunch."

Something very funny is going on, and I'M going to figure out what it is! Somebody was stealing her books and if she didn't find out who it was soon, she was going to have to pay a lot more than 20 cents!

I've got it!, Gabby thought, snapping her fingers! *I'll make a fake book, drop it in and wait around to see what happens!*

The next day, Gabby brought in a catalog from home. She folded it in half and taped the edges together, wrapped in it brown paper, colored the cover and dropped it in the bin. Then she pressed her ear to the book bin and waited. And waited. And just when she thought she should go home she heard a sad little sigh. *WHAT WAS THAT?!?!* It was coming from inside the bin!!!

Gabby opened the bin door and said "Hello? I heard you sighing! Come out you book thief!"

Silence.

"Hello?!? I know you're in there!! And I know you're taking my book. Just fess up and tell me who you are!"

Out popped a purple tentacle!! And another purple tentacle. And a third purple tentacle! *Gasp* Gabby fell backwards onto the grass. Five more purple tentacles with pink polka dots came after that. And then... just then, Gabby fainted.

A little while later, she felt a cool breeze. She slowly opened her eyes and sat up, almost face to face with a purple octopus as big as she was! The octopus had 6 library books, each in a different tentacle, and he was using the books to fan her! "Who are you? Where did you come from? Why are you stealing the books? Why aren't you living in water somewhere? Are you very old?"

The octopus laughed. "My name is Oscar. I came from the lake. I am 1 yr old, which in people years is probably 10. I walk here every morning and hide in the book bin" said Oscar.

"But why? And how did you get your big body in that little slot?" asked Gabby.

"Octopuses can squish into very tiny little holes as long as our beaks can fit" said Oscar. "I can live out of water for just a short time each day, so I come over here, wait for someone to drop their books in, and then I take them back with me to read them. I always bring them back though."

"But why do you take them?", asked Gabby. "Why not just get a library card?"

Oscar sighed, his shoulders humped over. "Grownups are afraid of me. They call the police to come get me, or they try to spray me with bug spray. I just get bored in the water all day, and I love to read. Nobody would ever give an octopus a library card! I didn't see any other way."

Gabby had an idea. "Meet me tomorrow, right here. There may be a grown-up with me, but it'll be okay, I promise!"

Oscar went home to the lake, and Gabby went to see Mrs. Stone. She told Mrs. Stone about the purple octopus, and how he needed his own library card. Mrs. Stone was VERY surprised to hear that there was a sneaky purple octopus hiding in the book bin, but Gabby had never told a lie before, so Mrs. Stone believed her. The next morning, just before the bell rang, Gabby and Mrs. Stone were waiting for Oscar. Pock! Pock! Pock! they heard faintly. Gabby knew it was Oscar's super suction feet coming their way. Suddenly, Oscar saw Mrs. Stone! *Oh no!* he thought. *She's going to try to catch me and spray me with bug spray!* But Gabby raced out to him and took one of his tentacles in her hand. "Mrs. Stone is our librarian. She'll take good care of you. You can trust her, I promise."

"Well Oscar, it's very nice to meet you!" said Mrs. Stone. "Gabby here tells me you LOVE to read."

"Yes, ma'am, I do" said Oscar, looking down. He still didn't trust her, no matter what Gabby said. "I'm sorry I've been taking your books home with me."

"Oscar, would you like your very own library card?" asked Mrs. Stone. "We have a lot more books inside than there are in the return bin. You can pick out anything you want, whenever the school is open. I've even talked to the principal, who has gotten you your very own special visitor pass."

Oscar's head snapped up, and his eyes flapped open and almost popped right out of his head! "Wowwee zowwee, would I ever! Do you really mean it?"

"Yep!" said Mrs. Stone. "You just have to promise to get your books yourself, instead of taking ones that other people have turned in."

"I promise!" said Oscar. That day, he made a new friend in Mrs. Stone, realized he could trust his other new friend Gabby, and checked out 9 books he'd never read before. And from that day on, Gabby never ever had another late fee.

The End