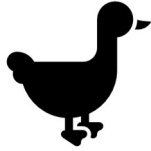


Written by Penelope Quacky



Penelope Quacky took a deep breath as she opened the door to the library. *This*

*is the last one*, she thought. She had been going all around the state of Oregon searching for a library to let her participate in a Short Story Contest. Penelope waddled straight to the front desk.

“Hello!” she greeted the librarian who was seated at the desk.

“Oh!” gasped the librarian when she looked down and caught sight of who had spoken.

“Um, hello. How can I, er, help you?”

Penelope explained that she wanted to be a writer, but the other libraries she visited told her that she couldn’t enter a Short Story Contest. The librarian looked at her thoughtfully.

“Hmmm, well nobody ever told me *not* to let a duck enter the Short Story Contest, but let me check the Rule Book,” she said as she flipped through a thick book. “Oh yes, here we are. Hmmm, I don’t see why not.”

“Oh, thank you!” cried Penelope.

The librarian smiled. “Of course. I don’t believe I got your name? I’m Annie.”

“Oh, right. My name is Penelope. Penelope Quacky. Thank you so very much!”

“You are very welcome,” said Annie.

She explained a few rules, and then Penelope was on her way.



The next day, Penelope sat herself by the pond where she lived and began her story. After a while, as she ate a picnic lunch of dandelion salad, she noticed another duck swimming towards her. As she was about to call out, the duck said,

“Hello Penny!”

“Hello Patches,” Penelope said, recognizing the duck. “How are you?”

“Fine, thank you,” was the response.

Patches was Penelope’s best friend. She always wore a flowered dress and a bow, and was very excitable. On the contrary, Penelope was very quiet, shy, and calm. She herself always wore a straw hat with a blue ribbon. Patches came over, plopped herself down next to Penelope, and started reading the story. A few minutes later, she looked up with her eyes twinkling and said,

“This is very good, Penelope. Are you going to publish it?”

“I can’t find anyone who will publish it,” answered Penelope. “So, in the meantime I entered a Short Story Contest at the Wilsonville Public Library.”

“Oh, Penny! How wonderful!” exclaimed Patches. “I think you will win first place!”

“I don’t know about that. There are plenty of other writers entering the contest,” Penelope said modestly.

“Penelope Quacky, you need to have more confidence in yourself!” Patches said.

After they talked for some time, Patches announced that she better be going.

“Goodbye, Penelope!”

And with that she swam off.



Two weeks later, Penelope put the finishing touches on her story. When she was done, she stood up, fluffed her feathers, and placed her pages in her handbag. Penelope waddled to the library, stopping at Patches’s nest on the way. Patches, of course, loved her story. When she arrived at the library, the same librarian, Annie, was at the desk.

“Hello Miss Quacky! How are you?” she said when she saw Penelope approaching. “Is your story coming along?”

“I’m good, thanks,” replied Penelope. “I have come to hand in my story. 1499 words.” She said proudly, remembering the 1500 word limit rule.

“Wonderful!” Annie exclaimed. “I can’t wait to read it!”

Penelope handed her the sheets of paper, and then used her new account to check out a book to read. On her way home, Penelope met another one of her friends, Mrs. Spotson.

“Hannah, get *off* of Art! Jenny dear, please hold Flo for a moment,” said Mrs. Spotson as she picked up Flo’s crying twin sister, Emily. “Hello, Penelope!”

“Hi! Do you need help getting home?” asked Penelope, smiling.

Mrs. Spotson had six ducklings. Jenny was the oldest, then came Art, Hannah, Flo and Emily, and baby Pewee.

“That would be amazing!” cried Mrs. Spotson. “Would you push the stroller? That way- Art, *please* don’t eat that slug, it’s not time for snack. I can carry Hannah. Jenny, will you- Art, *don’t eat that slug! How many times do I have to tell you??!!-hold Art’s wing?”*

As the merry little group made their way back to Mrs. Spotson’s nest, Penelope told her about her story. Mrs. Spotson thought it was very interesting and said that she could not wait to read it.

“Perhaps I will bring the ducklings to the library when it is on display. They would love to hear it,” said Mrs. Spotson. The Spotson’s lived on the east side of the pond, and Penelope had never been there. As they neared her nest, Mrs. Spotson said,

“There are many foxes on this side of the pond, so we are trying to move,”

Suddenly, they heard a rustle in the bushes nearby. *A fox?* Wondered Penelope. But it turned out to be only Patches.

“Hi guys! Sorry to scare you... if I did... anyway, I was just at the library, and your story Penny,” here she paused dramatically, “was stolen!”

Penelope gasped.

*“Stolen!”* she cried. “But, but how?”

“Well, I saw a duck waddle up to the desk. She looked like you, had the same hat and everything, but a different necklace. So right away I knew that it wasn’t you. The librarian didn’t seem to notice, though, because she handed her your story when she asked. Said she had to fix something... or something like that.”

Everyone stared at her in complete awe. Penelope did not know what to think. She was hoping that the thief didn’t get so far as to publish it. She was also mad that someone would actually *do* that. As she was fretting about what to do, Mrs. Spotson broke the silence and suggested that they all go into her nest and have a cup of blackberry juice. They all agreed, and while the ducklings played, Patches told Penelope the rest of the story.

“So, I did a little detective work. When that duck left, I followed her to a cave behind those two big boulders in the park, you know those ones? So then she went inside and pulled off her disguise, and said that she would now be famous! Then she, she...”

“Go on,” said Penelope nervously.

Patches gulped.

“Well, then she *quackled!*” (A duck’s cackle). She looked around expecting everyone to look alarmed, but they didn’t. “I knew I had to go to Duck Patrol right away, but decided to come tell you first. Do you want to come with me?”

Penelope nodded. They said thank you to Mrs. Spotson, who said she hoped everything worked out. When they got to Headquarters, they spoke to an officer about the theft. She said they would get started on the case right away.



“Ah, there’s one thing I never did tell you”, confessed Patches, when they got to Penelope’s nest. “I didn’t want you to worry more. Your impostor said that she wanted to... ducknap you!”

After hearing this, Penelope suggested that Patches stay the night with her. Patches agreed.



The following morning, the two ducks went back to Headquarters to ask about the thief. The officer they had spoken to the previous day had good news.

“She was caught! Your story is back at the library,” she said.

Penelope was overjoyed.

“Patches, do you want to come with me to the library? I have to add something to my story.”

As Patches and Penelope were gazing at the stars a few days later, Penelope said,

“Hey! Tomorrow is when they put up the winner’s story! Will you come along?”

“I wouldn’t miss it for the world!” suddenly, Patches’s eyes lit up. “And if you win, I will host a party at my nest in honor of you!”



The next day, Penelope waddled to the library with Patches. When they got there, they went straight to the case that held the winners’ stories. Penelope’s story was in it with a blue ribbon!

“Oh Penny! You did it! You made history! First duck to become an author!” Patches exclaimed.

Penelope didn’t say anything. She was too happy for words.



Later that evening, as Penelope stood on the doormat to Patches’s nest, about to ring the nestbell, (a doorbell for a nest.), Patches came over.

“Come in, Penelope, come in! Everyone is here!”

Everyone *was* there. All of Penelope’s friends, her siblings, her parents, her cousins, her aunts, and uncles. Even her great aunts and uncles, grandparents and great grandparents were there. Everybody was having a good time eating all the food that Patches had prepared, and dancing to the music. Mr. and Mrs. Spotsen were there, and Hannah came up to Penelope, took her wing, and dragged her out to the dance floor.

All of the ducks had a great time and were sad to leave, late at night. Oh, and I am sure that you want to know what Penelope Quacky's story is about. Well guess what? You are reading the last sentence of it.

The End