

The Library Card

Mongoose

A Reader's Theater Script

Excerpted from the book by Jerry Spinelli, published by Scholastic, New York, 1997

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BOOK SUMMARY: Four stories that range from humorous to heartbreaking reveal the amazing possibilities lurking behind library doors.

EXCERPT SUMMARY: Mongoose and his friend Weasel are doing as little as they can to get by, particularly in school. Both boys dream of what their lives will be like in a couple of years. Mongoose finds a library card, which opens up new worlds to him.

READER AGES: grades 6-8

LENGTH:

NARRATOR 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 – these may be combined or broken apart to add more reading roles

LIBRARIAN

MONGOOSE

MRS. HILL – Mongoose's mother

NARRATOR 1: Mongoose decided to wander a bit before going home. He checked out every tree trunk he came to, looking for another one of those bugs.

NARRATOR 2: In time, he found himself in front of the library. He had passed the library many times in his life, hundreds, but he had never gone inside. He was not even sure it was for kids.

NARRATOR 3: He reached into his pocket and pulled out a piece of stiff blue paper. It wasn't his, though. He had found it several days ago in his

pocket.

NARRATOR 4: His friend Weasel had snatched it from him when he found it and flipped it over the edge of the rooftop.

NARRATOR 5: Later that evening, it had caught Mongoose's eye...the small blue rectangle on the ground by the steps leading into the apartment house.

NARRATOR 6: Later still, when he returned home, he saw – lit by the moon on the windowsill – the blue card. He swiped it away and got into bed. In the morning there it was – the blue card –

ALL NARRATORS: ...on the floor.

NARRATOR 2: For the first time he took a good look at it. One side was blank. The other side was...blank, too!

NARRATOR 4: He kept turning it over and over. He could have sworn it said LIBRARY CARD when he had looked at it on the roof. It was just a blue, blank scrap.

NARRATOR 6: And yet, still, somehow he knew it was a library card. He didn't know how it worked. He thought maybe it was like a ticket, giving the holder admittance to a basketball game.

NARRATOR 1: Finding no ticket-taker at the door to the library, he

entered, walked up three steps, turned a corner, and found himself facing a counter with a lady behind it.

NARRATOR 3: When the lady looked up and saw him coming, she smiled as if she knew him. Was he supposed to know her? He walked up to the counter and showed her the card.

MONGOOSE: You collecting tickets?

LIBRARIAN: No, this is not to let you in. It's to let a book out. Now, how may I help you?

MONGOOSE: Well, I saw a huge insect a couple of days ago. It was three times the size of my thumbnail. It had popped-out beady eyes. Its body was nearly round and appeared to be hard on the outside, like a shell. It was clinging to the tree bark.

LIBRARIAN: I see. I may have something about that in this book. (Pause)
Good reading.

NARRATOR 5: As he left the library, he stuck the book under his coat and in his waistband and sprinted home. Only behind the closed door of his room did he take out the book. It was called...

ALL NARRATORS: *I Wonder.*

NARRATOR 2: He found what he wanted on page twenty-three. The bug

was called cicada, also seventeen-year locust. Mongoose read on.

NARRATOR 4: He learned that this cicada bug comes down from the tree as a baby worm and buries itself in the ground for seventeen years.

NARRATOR 6: And when it comes out – presto! – it’s a big bug that sheds its skin – eyes and all—and that’s what Mongoose had found.

ALL NARRATORS: Amazing.

NARRATOR 1: Imagine being in the dark – underground – for seventeen *years*.

NARRATOR 2: AND when you come out you’re different than when you went in.

NARRATOR 3: And then you crawl out of your own skin!

NARRATOR 4: The whole idea boggled him, made him tingly.

NARRATOR 5: He looked at his arm.

NARRATOR 6: He had goosebumps.

NARRATOR 3: The chair he sat in no longer felt safe. He moved to the floor, his back against the wall.

NARRATOR 1: He started paging back to the start of the book – he knew books should be read from beginning to end – but he kept getting ambushed.

NARRATOR 2: Pictures and words and numbers drew his eyeballs to them like flies to flypaper.

NARRATOR 5: He read about a bird that stays in the air for up to four years.

NARRATOR 4: And a fish that climbs trees.

NARRATOR 6: And another bird that fights its enemies by vomiting on them.

NARRATOR 2: And a bird, called the tickbird, that hitches a ride on the back of a rhino.

NARRATOR 5: And an insect – none other than the common old cockroach – that can walk around for two weeks with its head cut off.

NARRATOR 1: And an eel that's electric, that can turn on a light bulb.

NARRATOR 6: And the mole rat. The book called it the world's ugliest animal, and it was right. He had to spend an hour on the picture of the mole rat alone.

NARRATOR 3: And a worm that can stretch itself up to ninety feet.

NARRATOR 4: Mongoose slid full-body to the floor. The ceiling was spinning, he was woozy.

MRS. HILL: How long have you been in here?

MONGOOSE: (truthfully) Don't know.

MRS. HILL: You know you missed dinner four hours ago? You know it's nine o'clock?

MONGOOSE: You know there's a fish that climbs trees?

NARRATOR 1: Mrs. Hill looked down at her son, lying on his back on the floor, eyes closed, a look on his face she could not recall ever seeing before.

NARRATOR 2: And a book in his hand.

NARRATOR 3: About tree-climbing fish she knew nothing, but she did know that if there were such a thing . . .

NARRATOR 4: . . . it surely was not as rare as the sight of her youngest son holding a book.

NARRATOR 5: And missing a meal.

MRS. HILL: Just letting you know, the chef's off duty. If you get hungry, make yourself a sandwich.

MONGOOSE: (grunt).

NARRATOR: Mrs. Hill wasn't sure what that sound meant. But, carefully,...

ALL NARRATORS: ...she closed the door.