

Turtle-Bank Hustler

Written By

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EXT. SIDEWALK - MORNING

Small feet encased in cute green shoes, walk briskly past a row of colonial-style houses.

It's the weekend on a summer's day. Kids kick a football in the park. Ride bikes. Play.

ABBY DANIELS, 10, passes the park with a dedicated purpose. She wheels a suitcase behind her. Her hair is neatly tucked into a ponytail, bright clips on either side of her head.

She rounds the corner of the street and stops to check --

EXT. GROCERY STORE - CONTINUOUS

It's already busy, cars fill the lot. Abby pulls her suitcase past the parked cars, up to the door of the grocery store.

She opens her suitcase and takes out a fold-away stool. She carefully erects it, sure of her actions. She's done this before.

She presses a "Hello my name is" sticker to her chest. "ABBY" is written in neat children's writing on the sticker.

A CHEERY WOMAN smiles at Abby as she approaches the grocery store.

CHEERY WOMAN

Are you selling girl guide cookies?

ABBY

I'm not a girl guide.

CHEERY WOMAN

You look like you're setting up to sell something.

ABBY

No. I'm not selling anything.

Abby smiles at the Lady, like she's got a delicious secret. She's too cute to resist.

She takes a large, colourful, clay turtle from her suitcase. It's got a square hole cut into the back of it's shell, making it a turtle-piggybank.

Abby props a sign against the wall of the grocery store, behind the turtle-piggybank.

The sign is written in fat crayons with a kid's drawing of turtles beneath the words --

"Save the Turtles Organization - Hear a fun fact and donate. Volunteers : Abby and Tommy."

CHEERY WOMAN

I've never heard of the Save the Turtles Organization.

ABBY

Well, it's a very good organization.

CHEERY WOMAN

Where's Tommy? The other volunteer?

ABBY

Oh, it's just me today. Would you like to hear a fun fact about turtles?

CHEERY WOMAN

Sure, Abby.

ABBY

Turtles have been around nearly as long as the dinosaur! Around 215 million years!

CHEERY WOMAN

Really? Dinosaurs? I didn't know that. That's a great turtle fact.

Cheery Woman digs into her bag and pulls out some coins. She drops them into the turtle-bank. Abby rewards her with a huge smile of gratitude.

Cheery Woman enters the grocery store, pausing to wave at Abby.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - LATER

Abby stands now, holding the turtle-bank, the sign propped up on her stool next to her.

A FATHER teases his SON (14) as they approach the store. They laugh, joking around.

ABBY

Hello! Can you spare any change for the Save the Turtles Organization?

FATHER

Who?

ABBY

The Save the Turtles Organization is a non-profit organization that helps endangered species, like sea turtles.

Father checks out the sign.

FATHER

So you know something about turtles, do you? Did you know there's different kinds of sea turtles?

Abby nods.

FATHER (CONT'D)

Can you name me two?

SON

Dad --

Son shakes his head, embarrassed and dismissive.

Abby rattles the turtle-bank in her arms. The coins jingle inside. She raises her eyebrows at Father.

FATHER

I will donate a dollar for every kind of sea turtle you name.

SON

Oh... come on. Nail it, Abby!

Abby puts down the turtle-bank. She holds up her little hands, counting off as she talks.

ABBY

The Green turtle, Hawksbill turtle, Loggerhead turtle, Leatherback turtle, Olive Ridley turtle, Kemp's Turtle and the Flatback. That's seven. But you can just give me two dollars.

SON

That was awesome! Dad, was that not awesome?

Father is stunned. Son is overjoyed to see his dad bested by a kid. Father pulls some coins from his pocket. Son happily counts them out...

SON (CONT'D)

Four... six... seven.

FATHER

You forgot the snapping turtle.

ABBY

That's a freshwater turtle.

SON

Boom! That deserves another dollar.

Father laughs as he relinquishes one more coin. With a flourish, Son drops the coins into the bank.

FATHER
Well played, Abby.

ABBY
Thanks!

EXT. GROCERY STORE - LATER

Abby sits on her wee stool, smiling at the people passing by. A few BUSY SHOPPERS dig change from their pockets, dropping it into the turtle-bank.

A trendy YOUNG WOMAN, wise to the world, watches people donate to Abby's cause. She reads the sign. She knows the score.

YOUNG WOMAN
So, what do you do with the money?

ABBY
Help save the turtles.

YOUNG WOMAN
Yeah, sure kid. Just like I helped the homeless with my lemonade money when I was a kid. Save the Turtles Organization doesn't even exist. What are you going to buy yourself?

Abby blinks, not sure how to answer.

ABBY
Nothing.

YOUNG WOMAN
Just don't buy cigarettes, okay? Buy yourself some candy or something, but stay away from the cancer sticks. They are not cool.

ABBY
If I promise not to buy cigarettes, will you donate?

YOUNG WOMAN
Sure, Kid. But if I see you in the store later, buying smokes --

ABBY
No smokes. Promise.

The Young Woman drops some change into the turtle-bank. Abby smiles.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - LATER

An OLD LADY chats with Abby like they were best friends as the turtle-bank gets more coins from passing SHOPPERS.

ABBY

The shell of a turtle is made up of about fifty different bones.

OLD LADY

Fifty? You don't say?

ABBY

It's true. It's kind of like their ribs or spine or something. It has blood and everything. It's not just a house they live in.

The Old Lady rubs her back.

ABBY (CONT'D)

Do you want to sit down?

OLD LADY

Just for a minute.

The Old Lady sits down on Abby's stool.

ABBY

How old are you?

OLD LADY

Really old. I just had my eighty-first birthday last month.

ABBY

Tortoises can live up to one hundred and fifty years old. That's heaps older than you. In tortoise years, you're quite young.

The Old Lady chuckles. She beacons to a WELL DRESSED MAN entering the grocery store.

OLD LADY

Come save the Turtles.

Well Dressed Man pretends he doesn't see them as he walks to the entrance. He slows, hesitates, is he considering? He checks his shoe, like he's stepped in something. He darts into the store, completely ignoring them.

OLD LADY (CONT'D)

Tight bugger.

INT. GROCERY STORE - LATER

It's a busy day, the lines at the cash registers are long. People wait with full shopping baskets.

Abby walks to the side counter where the cigarettes and lotto tickets are sold. She carefully opens her turtle-bank and pours the donations onto the counter.

A CASHIER smiles at Abby as she helps her count the change.

CASHIER

Twenty-four dollars and forty cents. What do you want to buy?

The trendy Young Woman waits in line to pay. She sees Abby at the cigarette counter. She's furious.

Abby counts out twenty-four recycle bags that hang next to the cigarette counter. She heaves them onto the counter.

CASHIER (CONT'D)

You want to buy recycle bags?

Abby nods. She certainly does.

CASHIER (CONT'D)

Okay. That's twenty-four dollars. Do you want them in a bag?

The Cashier pulls out a plastic bag. Abby shakes her head. She piles all the bags into one recycle bag.

CASHIER (CONT'D)

What are you going to do with them?

Abby walks towards the rows of cashier stations. She spots the Cheery Woman that donated to her earlier. Cheery Woman's groceries are being piled into plastic bags.

Abby gives Cheery Woman one of the recycle bags she just bought.

ABBY

It's a gift from the turtles for donating.

CHEERY WOMAN

Oh, I keep meaning to get some, you know. Thank you.

Cheery Woman takes the bag. Abby watches as the groceries fill the recycle bag.

Abby looks at the sea of plastic bags on the counters. She goes to someone with a cart full of groceries, about to take a lot of plastic. She hands them two recycle bags.

ABBY
They're free.

Abby hands out the bags to people standing in line. Some of the same people that donated earlier.

The trendy Young Woman watches her, trying to understand. Abby hands her a bag and grins.

EXT. GROCERY STORE - MOMENTS LATER

Abby walks back to her stool and suitcase outside the store. She sits down, puts her empty turtle-bank on the ground in front of the sign.

A FAMILY walks towards the store.

ABBY
Hi! Can you spare a donation to
save the turtles?

EXT. SIDEWALK OF RESIDENTIAL STREET - LATER

It's late in the afternoon. Abby walks down the sidewalk, pulling her suitcase along behind her.

She turns into a driveway and up the stairs of the house.

INT. HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Abby goes into her bedroom and tucks her suitcase into the closet. She turns to a large tank on her desk.

ABBY
Tommy, we had an awesome day today!

She goes to the tank and gently, carefully lifts out a deformed turtle, cradling it lovingly in her hands.