

Mobile Exhibition

Wanda, the pretty little garbage truck, was blinking her headlights impatiently. She had been waiting for at least half an hour at the front end of Tulip Street to be able to drive in and collect the garbage. The entrance of the narrow Old Town street was blocked by a truck.

“I don’t understand how a gigantic vehicle like this had the bravery to come to Old Town. It will get stuck at the end, and then I don’t know how on earth I will be able to pick up all the waste,” she grumbled to herself.

The truck didn’t seem to want to move. Finally the driver showed up, a man in blue work overalls. Wanda mustered up all her courage and addressed him.

“I would like to know how much longer I will need to wait in order to get into the street. I need to collect the garbage bags.”

“I am afraid that will not happen any time soon,” the man scratched the top of his head. “We have just starting the loading now. I think you had better postpone it until tomorrow.”

“But what is taking this long? Are you loading Easter eggs perhaps?” Wanda said resentfully.

“Almost,” the truck driver was laughing. “We are transporting objects from the museum. The renovation starts next week, and we have to clear out the building. The work is going to last until the end of the year, and the whole museum will be transformed inside and out. The valuable artefacts cannot stay here in the dust and dirt. They would be in the way. The statues, paintings and special furniture are going to get taken to the warehouse in Tiny Town. Once the renovation is finished, we will bring them back to their renewed home. I am sorry I have blocked your way.”

“And why haven’t I been notified of this?” Wanda said dejectedly but there was nothing she could do. She turned around and started rolling in the direction of Main Square.

The square was barely recognizable. It was completely covered by tables and chairs. The tables had sheets of paper, pencils, crayons and watercolours scattered about.

“What’s going on here?” Wanda shouted when she saw a child racing past her. “Is it the latest thing to teach the school children’s art class here?”

“You could say that,” Malvina, who came up to her right at that moment, laughed. “They are having a drawing competition. The kids got the task of drawing a picture that



shows one of the famous sights of Wriggle Town. They will have an exhibition of the best ones.”

“Come; take a look!” Clara, who stood a little further away, invited her. “You can’t even imagine how talented these children are!”

Wanda rolled from one table to the next, looking at all the drawings and paintings with amazement. She recognized the City Hall in one picture, the Grammar School in another and the Museum in a third. Even the Amusement Park, the boating lake and the near-by mountains showed up amongst the works. A little girl with a ponytail proudly pointed to the picture in front of her where she was drawing a lot of animals.

“How do you like it?” she asked.

“It is very nice!” the pretty little garbage truck praised her. “It looks to me like you chose the Zoo!”

The little girl’s face lit up with joy. But her happiness was soon interrupted by loud crying. At the neighbouring table a little boy was sobbing with a smudged face. He had accidentally spilled an entire box of paint all over the almost finished picture. A great big splotch appeared in the middle of the carefully crafted painting.

“Don’t cry!” Wanda tried to calm the weeping little boy. “You can draw another one. Shall I bring you a clean sheet of paper?”

But the little boy seemed inconsolable. He was shaking his head ardently as he was breathlessly explaining “I was aaaaaalmost finiiiiished, and I woooked so much wiiiiith it! Did you see how greaaaaat it turned oooooout?” he looked at Wanda with teary eyes.

“Unfortunately not,” the garbage truck shook her cabin.

“I’m sure you woould have liked it, because I chose Waaaaste Works Yard. I was able to draw everything exactly, only the Burner's chimney was missing,” the little boy was sniffing.

“What if,” said Wanda, deep in thought, “I helped you recover your drawing?”

“This cannot be recovered anymore!” the little boy was complaining. “It looks like a huge pile of garbage!”

“That’s exactly what I was thinking,” Wanda smiled at him, “it looks like the front of the Burner. If you were to draw Walter, the recycling truck, here at the edge of the paper and the opening of the Burner to the other side I am certain nobody could figure out what happened here!”



The little boy stopped sniffing. It was obvious he was thinking about Wanda's idea, and then suddenly he grabbed a paintbrush and swiftly started painting.

Not much later a tired but happy Wanda rolled through the gates of Waste Works Yard. She was smudgy and covered with paint all the way to her antennae, but the garbage truck, who was usually very proud of her clean and well-groomed exterior, was not bothered by any of this.

"Goodness gracious, you look great! Are these the latest fashion colours?" Walter greeter her. Everybody knew he was Wanda's number one admirer.

"Don't toy with me!" Wanda looked at him with bewilderment. "I am dirty all over. There is a drawing competition on Main Square, and I got all splodgy from the paints."

"That's interesting, but how did you get to Main Square?"

"Don't even get me started on that! I couldn't get into Tulip Street on account of a parked truck, because they are in the process of moving the museum. I thought about coming back home for a little bit of a detour," Wanda reported.

"Oh yes, I read about that in the newspaper," Walter nodded. "It will be a huge job!"

"And why didn't you tell me about it? I was stuck there for a half an hour by the time I found out there was no point in waiting. Nobody warned me I could only collect the garbage there tomorrow."

"Don't be upset, Wanda," Walter tried to console her. "Instead, be glad you had enough time to look around at Main Square."

A few days later, during the usual afternoon relaxation, Waldemar was reading the Wriggle Town Chronicle when an article caught his eye.

"They announced the results of the drawing competition!" he shouted to Wanda, who was chatting at the other end of the garage. "A drawing depicting the Burner of Waste Works Yard got a special award!"

"Show me!" Wanda lifted her cabin.

Some of them gathered around Waldemar, and they snatched the paper from one another's levers. They were overjoyed as they were looking at the colourful drawings published in the newspaper.

"One is better than the other! The picture made of the City Hall is so life-like, it looks



just like a photograph!” the garbage trucks cut each other off.

“Come here, Walter!” Malvina called the recycling waste collection truck who was tinkering with his wheel. “Look, you are in one of them!”

And indeed, on the left side of the picture that won the special award, Walter was about to get a container down from his platform. He was perfectly recognizable with the recycling containers lining up on his back. The similarity was perfect.

“You are going to be world-famous, Walter!” Wera teased him. “If anyone doesn't know you already they will surely recognize you now!”

“Don’t joke around!” the garbage truck smiled back shyly. “The Wriggle Town Chronicle is only read here in Wriggle Town!”

“That’s true, but here in the article they are saying that the children can participate in a special award ceremony tomorrow, and after that the winning drawings will be exhibited in the lobby of the Museum. They are expecting many newspaper and television reporters from the nearby towns, and even a national television channel will have a report about it. This means you will be on TV!”

“It looks like there could be a bit of a problem here!” he announced. The others looked at him with confusion.

“The other day Wanda and I were talking about the fact that the Museum is getting renovated, correct?” he turned to the pretty little garbage truck.

“Yes, that is right!” Wanda agreed. “A few days ago I couldn’t collect the garbage bags from the street of the Museum, because they were packing up all the art pieces. They cannot exhibit the children’s work there at the moment! Is it possible that the Mayor’s Office doesn’t even know about this? We have to warn them immediately!”

The Mayor was pacing nervously in the courtyard of City Hall as he was listening to Wanda and Waldemar.

“I have no idea where we could put the pictures! We ordered large posters of every winning drawing from the printing-house. Only the lobby of the Museum has big enough walls where we could put up a worthy public display. It is too late to postpone the award ceremony and cancel the newspaper and television reporters!” the Mayor buried his head in his hands.

“How many drawings do we need to find room for exactly?” Waldemar asked.



“We awarded twenty of them,” came the despondent reply.

“What if we looked for empty walls?” the street sweeper raised the question.

“Do you mean that we could exhibit the pictures on firewalls? Not a bad idea! And we could organize a sightseeing tour for the visitors,” the Mayor lifted his head. “If we could find twenty firewalls that are clearly visible, then we would be saved! We could sit our guests into the sightseeing bus, and we could show them the city as well as the drawings!”

Getting tired from searching for firewalls, Clara was standing helplessly in front of the church entrance of Old Town.

“Twenty gigantic empty walls? I don’t think it’s possible to find that many!” she sighed. “I have gone all over town, through and through, but so far I have only managed to find seven such walls that could be useful. I give up!”

“Hold on a little longer! I am rather happy we actually found seven walls!” Malvina encouraged her friend. “And the surroundings of the Zoo are still ahead!”

In the meantime all the garbage trucks were bustling around in the timber warehouse at Waste Works Yard.

“We cannot just put the posters on the walls like that!” Wera explained to the obtuse Wilma. “We need to make suitable wooden frames that will hold the pictures and that will fasten them to the walls.”

With directions from Waldemar they sorted through the recyclable boards and splints. They tried to save every usable piece. Still, the prestigious street sweeper was not satisfied.

“This amount will not be enough for twenty posters,” he said.

“Don’t dishearten us, Waldemar! There must be a solution,” the trucks looked at each other in the Waste Works Yard garage.

Oppressive silence fell upon the entire gang. The garbage trucks couldn’t remember the last time they felt so helpless. The tension was heightened by the appearance of Clara and Malvina. As soon as they looked at them, the trucks knew they hadn’t succeed either.

“There aren’t enough empty walls, and we don’t have enough timber,” Waldemar summed up the hopeless situation.

“We must form a crisis management committee immediately. We cannot let the city down!” Wera issued the command. “Those of you who have seen something interesting lately,



blink your headlight!”

“I haven’t noticed anything special,” Samson spoke quietly.

“Nothing out of the ordinary for me, either,” Willy continued.

“Nothing exciting has happened to us either, unless you count that we ran into Zebulon at the entrance to the Zoo,” Malvina blinked once with her headlights. “I hadn’t seen him for a long time; I thought he had moved away from the city.”

“Who is Zebulon?” Splotch asked. “I have never heard of him.”

“He is an old friend of ours,” Wera explained. “He used to be a street sweeper in Old Town, but he doesn’t work any more; he retired a couple of years ago.”

“But he was working now!” Clara interjected. “He had become a notice board.”

“He looked rather funny,” Malvina snickered.

“He told us he was the sandwich man. One person between two boards. One on his back, one on his front,” Clara continued.

“And did he really look like a piece of meat in a sandwich?” Goliath joked.

“Oh, come on! He was advertising the new restaurant that has recently opened on Main Square.”

“That’s exactly the job for him,” Wera smiled as she was trying to imagine the old street sweeper. “Not too strenuous and still quite interesting. I imagine a lot of people stop and talk to him as he is so well known.”

“That’s exactly right,” Malvina confirmed. “There were even people taking pictures with him.”

Waldemar was staring into space this whole time and didn’t add anything to the conversation. His thoughts were all over the place. Then suddenly he started talking.

“What if, just like Zebulon, we also became sandwich-men, I mean sandwich-trucks?” he asked. The others turned to him dumbfounded.

“What do you mean by that, Waldy?” Wanda rolled her eyes with a frown. “Do you want us to advertise the new restaurant as well?”

“I didn’t mean for the restaurant,” the street sweeper laughed, “but rather for the children’s pictures. The mayor told us that he would take the guests for a sightseeing tour. What if it was not the guests who went to see the drawing, but rather the drawings that came to the guests?”

“This is a fantastic idea!” cried Walter, who quickly realized what the handyman of



the yard was talking about. “We have enough timber to make frames for the pictures and fasten them to our sides. Let’s turn into sandwich-trucks!”

Everybody felt relieved. Not even Wanda protested against letting the children’s colourful drawings shine on her side in full splendour.

“Then we only need to get the Mayor’s approval!” Wera took over. “Not that he has any other choice,” she smiled at the others.

By the following morning everything was ready. The garbage trucks lined up at the gates of Waste Works Yard, washed and polished with giant posters stretched on both of their sides. At exactly ten o’clock the procession headed in the direction of City Hall. Main Square was already filled with people; everybody wanted to see the children’s drawings.

“This feels as if we’re rolling down a catwalk!” Wanda whispered to Wilma when they arrived and the photographers started taking pictures of them. “I feel like a supermodel!”

“Look, that’s my picture there!” little Sam shouted when he saw the image decorating Wanda’s side. “And on my favourite garbage truck! This is so cool!”

Wanda’s headlights beamed with pride when she heard the little boy had called her his favourite.

It wasn’t just Wanda who felt special, all the other trucks did as well. Everyone admired the drawings embellishing their sides. The adults couldn’t give enough praise to the mobile exhibition, and the children were shouting each other down while showing their creations to everyone around. The evening news broadcast a special report about the exhibition in motion. The reporters followed the garbage trucks and gave an account of everything that had happened to them that day. The following day the newspapers headlined the events of the exhibition with photographs of the garbage trucks.

“See, Wera, we all became world famous in the end!” Walter smiled at the old water truck.

“That’s correct,” Wera winked at him, “I became the world’s oldest model!”

THE END

